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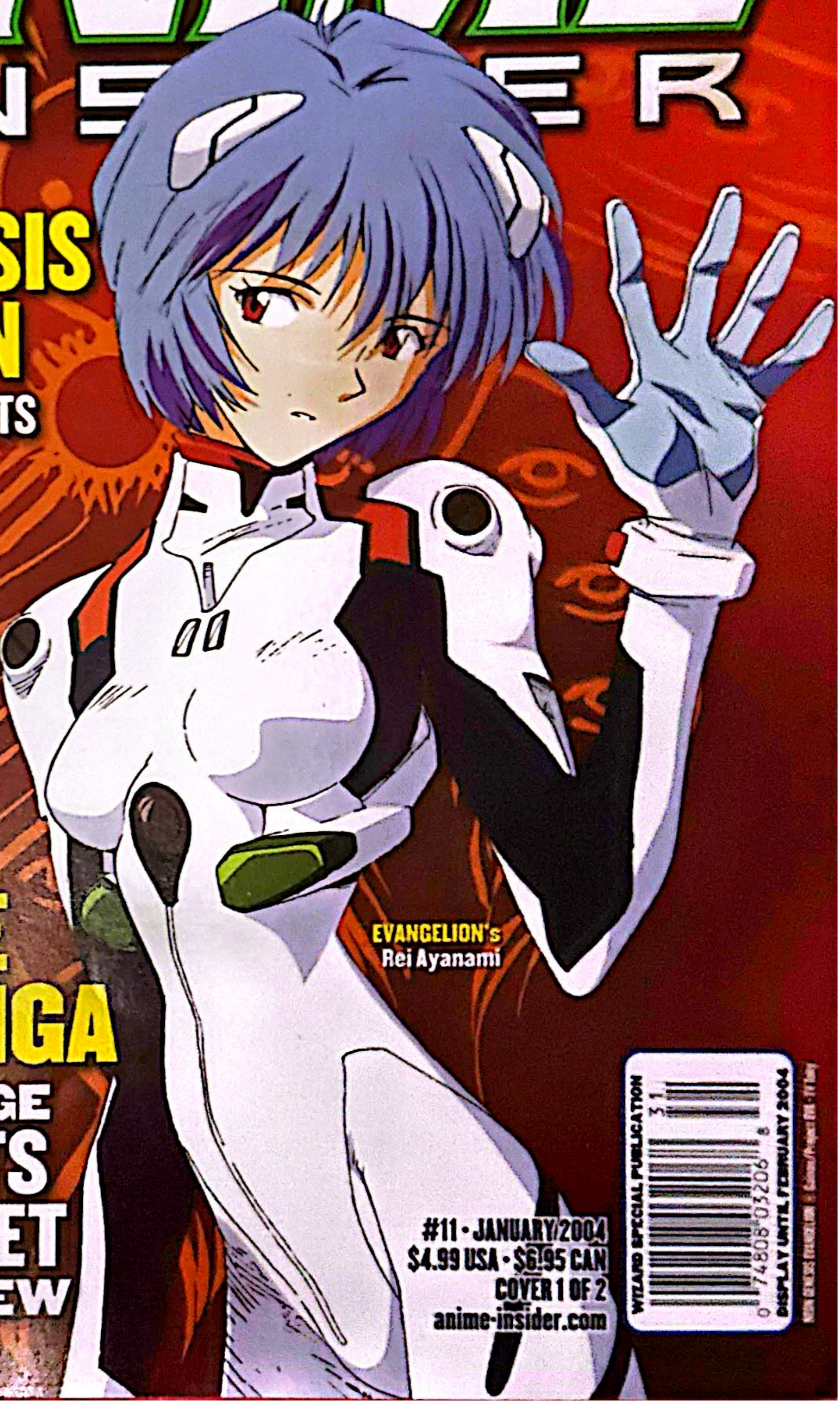

EVANGELION's Rei Ayanami

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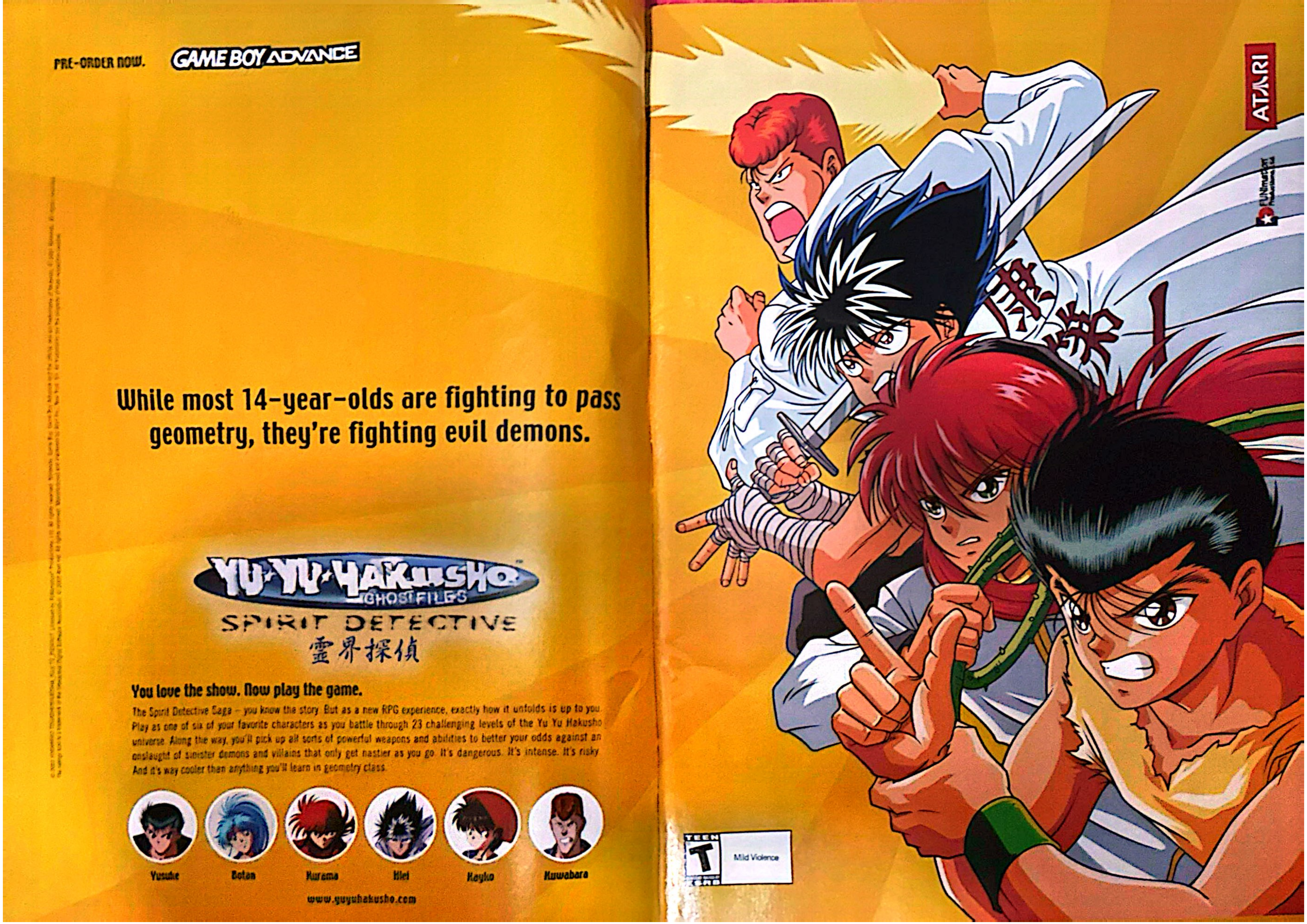

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ANIME INSIDER
#11 • JANUARY 2004

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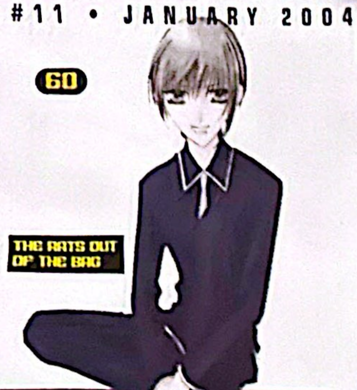
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THE RATS OUT OF THE BAG

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THE UNHAPPIEST CHILDREN IN ANIME

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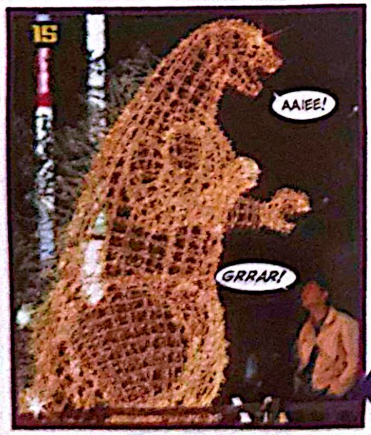
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GRRAR!

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MAN, I'M RIDIN' UP.
YOU WOULDN'T LIKE HIM WHEN HE'S MAD

YOU SPOKE - WE LISTENED!

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FROM THE TOP

HOLIDAY CHEERS AND TEARS

WAIT A SECOND REI, THIS IS YOUR HOUSE WE'VE BEEN DROPPING PRESENTS INTO!
DARN IT, ASUKA. NOW I HAVE TO KILL YOU.

SANTA CAUSE A little extra work over the holidays? If only Asuka and Rei could help us edit...

Anime's killed us.

I'm not talking about the time managing editor Robert Bricken passed out into the barrel of Bud Light he was guzzling while trying to watch the entire run of *Dragon Ball Z* at once (we hushed that one up pretty nicely). No, it's this damnable extra issue of *Anime Insider* that's done us in.

As I write this from my deathbed, laying weakly in my Hamtaro jammies, I remember when this issue seemed like a good idea. It was a sunnier time, and we were gaily pouring through the monthly letters and emails. So many of you mentioned that you'd seen a show on TV, liked it, and wanted advice on what to watch next. "Let's do a massive genre-by-genre rundown of the coolest anime to watch!" brainstormed associate editor Trisha Sebastian, a glow in her eye. "Does anyone want to share my barrel of beer? Too bad!" slurred Rob, drool on his chest. Our course was set.

We quickly noticed that in order to fill the needs of our fans and do such a far-reaching feature right, we'd have to make it big and reconfigure the rest of the book to make room. Instead of going to town on one of our regular issues, we thought up this extra "holidays-only" issue and slipped it into the schedule. Hence, we sealed our doom.

Once we lived the vacation-filled high-life of a bimonthly magazine's easy workload. Now, we've worked ourselves to death, having typed so often that our finger bones are exposed, stared at computer screens so long that our eyes have deflated and eaten so little that I can fit into these ridiculous PJs.

So enjoy, knowing that you've killed us. You won't see us again.

Sincerely,

Douglas Goldstein
Senior Editor

P.S. See you next month!

MASTHEAD

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FEATURE

侵食汚染 .hack Part 3 OUTBREAK

In the 3rd chapter of the .hack saga, "The World" continues to deteriorate as the virus spreads out of control, and crosses the increasingly transient line separating "The World" and reality. As Kite, you must battle your way through "The World" before it implodes. In fact, you're faced with the possibility that this virus might be unstoppable.

Luckily for us, the .hack series is a simulated MMORPG, so at least the virus can't spread to this world!

publisher Bandai//developer Cyber Connect 2
genre Simulated MMORPG//release date Fall 2003

In OUTBREAK, you'll fight your way through contaminated servers and eliminate enemies. The plot thickens, and the story draws you in further as you try to uncover the cause of this debilitating virus and rescue your friend Orca, who's still in a coma.

I love part 3 and am addicted to the completely original gaming experience that .hack offers. I enjoyed part 1 and became addicted with part 2. The battles and story intensified and the cast grew to include online/offline players. Moreover, the simulation of playing an online game deepened with emails and news items that drew me further into "The World".

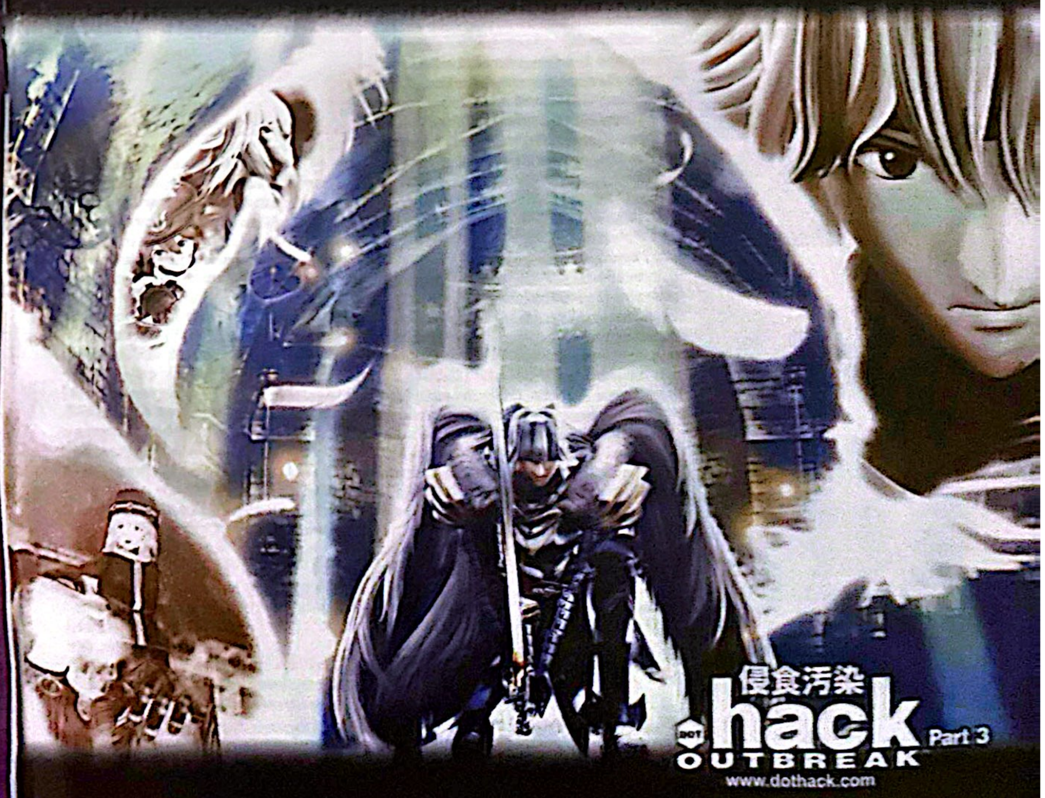
A great story and addictive gameplay.

Encounter characters from the animated TV series.

This series keeps getting better and better, plus you also get a new episode of the original video animation of ".hack//LIMINALITY" in the same box.

Bring on .hack 4! Keep your eye on **www.dothack.com** for more details.

-Orca, Web News, Altimit.
Abrasive False Tragedy



TEEN T Mature Sexual Themes Mild Language Violence
.hack//SIGN As seen on CARTOON NETWORK PlayStation 2 BANDAI

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ANIMAIL!

YOU'RE FANS, YOUR MAIL

Yep, it's that time again! In this edition of "Animail" we tackle the subject of anime ratings, as well as multiculturalism, manslayers and much more. Before we get to all that, I'd like to present reader Tom Aiken of Spring Creek, NV, with our Most Obsessive Fan award, for writing us a dozen handwritten letters, each of them ending with "P.S. When will you guys do a swimsuit issue?" I think issue #8's swimsuit competition is going to have to do for now, Tom, but thanks for spending $4.44 on stamps and supporting the United States Postal Service.

MY CLOTHES STILL AREN'T DRY! THIS THING SUCKS!
US MAIL

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

You may think this is a stupid question, but I was wondering why the ratings for anime videos are like "3 & Up" or "13 & Up" instead of G, PG, PG-13 or R.

Michael Wilson
Fenelton, PA

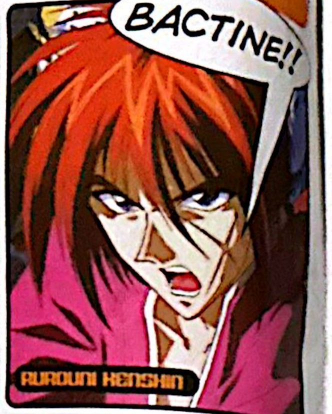
As with most things in life, it comes down to money. Scratch. Green. Bread. Dough. Bling. Blang. Snorkum. What the heck am I saying? Anyway, the ratings for theatrically released movies are trademarks of the Motion Picture Association of America. And, as Geneon assistant marketing manager Chad Kime explains, "The MPAA charges a great deal of money to even review the product to do the rating. We devote our budget to other things," he says, like DVD extras.

At Geneon, MPAA ratings, as well as TV ratings (TV-Y7, TV-G, TV-14, etc.) are used as guidelines. "If Doc Hollywood is PG-13 and gets away with full-frontal nudity, then a little bit of breast could be a '13 & Up.' If there's a lot of violence and a lot of gore, that's probably an R rating, so we should give it '16 & Up.'" Kime says Geneon tries to rate its releases conservatively. For example, in Serial Experiments Lain, a high school student commits suicide; the violence isn't graphic, but Pioneer gave it a "16 & Up" because of mature content.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I'm a big fan of *Rurouni Kenshin*. I've heard from numerous sources that many of the characters in the show were once real historical figures, and that some of the series' events really took place. Is this true?

Destiny Nelson
Louisville, KY



Totally true! Kenshin is so full of historical characters, places and events that I could never list them all here. (And I'm not sorry about that! Whew!) Maybe one day we'll devote a feature to Kenshin and all its history. Maybe it'll be next issue. Who knows?

However, I can tell you that Kenshin's character is based on a real person named Gensai Kawakami, who was a hitokiri ("assassin," or "manslayer," as the series puts it) during the Meiji Restoration in 1868. This uprising ended the Tokugawa government's control of Japan and returned power to the Emperor Meiji.

Also, for those of you wondering, Digimon was not based on historical events.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

Why don't you guys show more African-American anime characters?

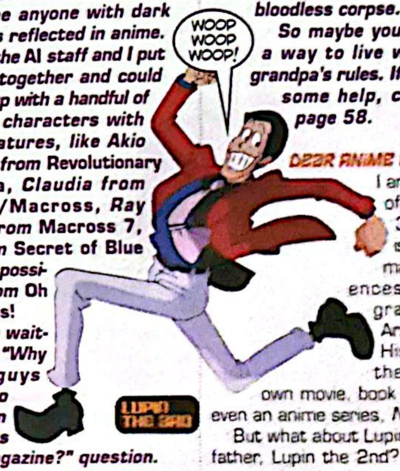
Debbie Jensen
New York, NY

SOMEONE GET JESSE JACKSON ON THE PHONE.
ANTHY

Because there just aren't very many! Unlike America, Japan is a very homogenous culture. If you live in Japan, odds are you look Japanese! You could walk around all day and not see anyone with dark skin. That's reflected in anime.

In fact, the AI staff and I put our heads together and could only come up with a handful of prominent characters with African features, like Akio and Anthy from Revolutionary Girl Utena, Claudia from Robotech/Macross, Ray Lovelock from Macross 7, Nadia from Secret of Blue Water and possibly Urd from Oh My Goddess!

Now I'm waiting for the "Why do you guys show so many Asian characters in your magazine?" question.



TO ANIME INSIDER,

I live with my grandfather, and he doesn't let me watch Adult Swim, even when it's not a school night. I sometimes have to steal the remote just to watch Toonami.

He hates anime for three screwed-up reasons:

1. "There's better programming on." But he watches war coverage every chance he gets. That stuff's depressing.

2. "You're too young." But I'm 12. Some of those shows are TV-14, but so what? It's only a two-year difference.

3. "It's not good for you." But it's just TV. I'm not one of those idiots who watches violent shows, then goes and shoots someone.

I've got half a mind to move into your warehouse.

James Robert Hoyt
Rochester, NY

Ever since issue #4, readers have been begging to move into our warehouse to escape their oppressive, anime-hating parents. It's not as glamorous as you think. It's 130 degrees in the summer, -20 degrees in the winter, and there are spiders back there the size of your fist. Once an intern got locked in the warehouse over the weekend, and on Monday morning we found his bloodless corpse.

So maybe you can find a way to live with your grandpa's rules. If you want some help, check out page 58.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I am a big fan of Lupin the 3rd. Lupin is constantly making references to his grandfather, Arsène Lupin. His grandfather has his own movie, book series and even an anime series, *Nighthood*.

But what about Lupin the 3rd's father, Lupin the 2nd? Are there any movies, books or anime that involve him?

Bobby Pennington
via cyberspace

The first Lupin did indeed have a son named Jean, who couldn't have been Lupin the 3rd's dad (you need a 2nd to have a 3rd, after all). But check this out: according to coolfrench-comics.com, Lupin later fathered a child out of wedlock with Queen Olga of a fictional Balkan

COSPLAY CAVALCADE

SAN FROM 'PRINCESS MONONOKE'

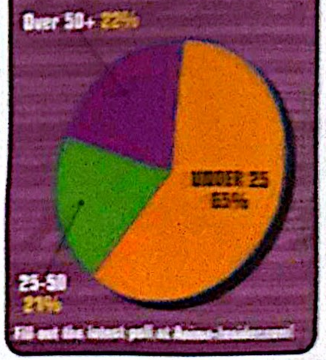
BY CORY JOHNSON

There aren't a lot of wolves in Cranford, NJ, so Cory Johnson was abandoned and then raised by humans. Luckily, the humans taught her to cut things with scissors and sew, and then make this kickin' costume of the forest princess San. They also taught her to put on clothes so she could wear the outfit to the 2003 Big Apple Anime Fest, where we found her! Wanna join the Cavalcade? Then send your pic to Anime Insider! Now!

HEY... WHERE'S MY PURSE?

WEBPOLL

HOW MANY ANIME DVD'S DO YOU OWN?



Fill out the latest poll at Anime-Insider.com!

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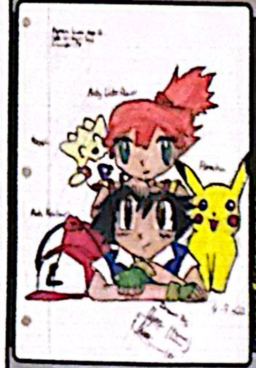
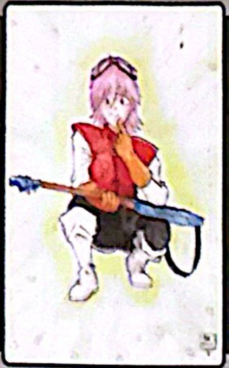
Wanna prove to the anime world just what an underappreciated artiste you are? Then send us your artwork, preferably in color and on non-lined paper, to Anime Insider, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920, or send it via e-mail to animeinsider@aol.com. All submissions MUST include the character name(s) and YOUR full name and address, including city and state. Booyaka!



POKÉ-POSSE
ELYSSA CASSO, LEANDER, TX



HARUKO HARUHARA
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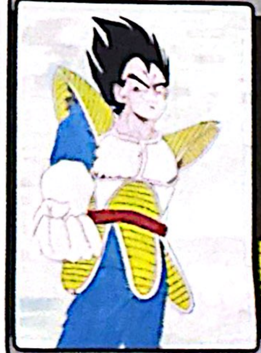

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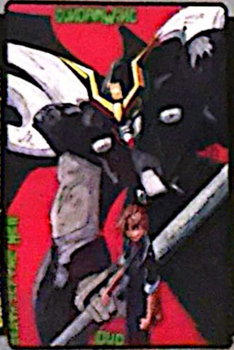

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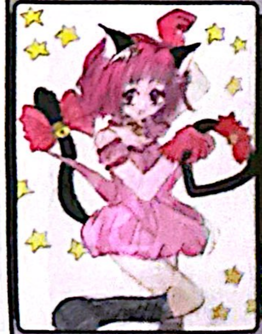

ICHIGO
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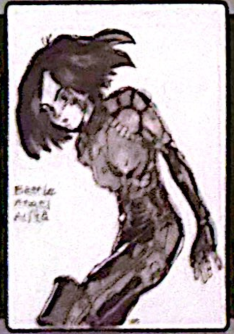

GALLY
JOSE ESPINOZA, WATSONVILLE, CA

Right Stuf
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principality called Borostyria. It's been theorized that the illegitimate son moved to America and anglicized his name from Lupin into Wolfe—namely Nero Wolfe, the star of a famous series of detective novels and most recently the subject of a TV series on cable network A&E. How about that?

Hey, I'm on a roll. Here's another Lupin query...

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

Is it "Lupin" or "Rupan"? I don't get it.

Colin Morgan
Phoenix, AZ

It's both! Since the Japanese language makes no distinction between R's and L's, "Rupan" works just fine. The three Japanese characters that spell "Lupin" then become "ru" (or "lu"), "pa" and "n."

Why not use "pi" instead of "pa"? Because in Japanese, that would be an "ee" sound, making it "Lupeen."

The "Rupan" spelling gained popularity in the U.S. because: a) it's technically the correct translation of the actual Japanese spelling and b) the name "Lupin" was legally hairy to use, since the heirs of Arsène Lupin's creator Maurice Leblanc were none too pleased about the unauthorized Lupin the 3rd.

Speaking of copyrights, it's interesting to note that Leblanc himself wrote crossover stories featuring Arsène Lupin and Sherlock Holmes, until Holmes' creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle objected. After that, Leblanc used a character named "Herlock Sholmes." Isn't that clever?

DEAR A.I.,

In the ongoing battle of anime on DVD vs. anime on VHS, I'd like to tell you why this otaku has a soft spot for tapes.

Now I know that DVDs are, in all aspects, the very best way to get anime (especially if you're a collector), but you have to admit that they just don't have the same effect on the viewer as a crummy VHS does. Sure, the picture is a little fuzzy and you have to take a full two minutes out of your day to rewind it, but it seems like you're actually watching something—not just loading little bits of information. VHS has a cool, outdated charm about it.

And I think the ultimate irony would be a DVD-oholic (like Jeffrey Branch from Philadelphia [from "Animail" #8] buying the *Cowboy Bebop* DVD collection and watching Episode

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WORDS FOR THE WISE

WANNA KNOW WHAT ALL THESE PEOPLE ARE YAMMERING ABOUT?

CHIBI—[CHEE-bee] A word meaning "small" or even "shrimp." Example: Sailor Chibi Moon.
HENTAI—[HEN-tie] Japanese for "pervert" or "perverted." Refers to naughty anime and manga too.
ICHIBAN—[EE-chee-bahn] Literally "number one"; also "the best."
MANGA—[MAHN-ga] Japanese comic books.
MANGA-KA—[MAHN-ga KA] Japanese word for creator of manga.
OTAKU—[o-TAH-koo] Hardcore anime fan. If you have a tattoo, you probably are one.
OVA—[or OVA] Stands for Original Video Animation. Anime that went direct-to-video or DVD.
SEIYUU—[SAY-yoo] A voice actor or actress.
SENSEI—[SEN-say] Teacher or instructor. Also used as an honorific: "Onizuka-sensei."
SHÔNEN—[SHO-nehn] An adjective meaning "for boys." Shônen manga, shônen anime, etc. Shôjo is the equivalent "for girls."
SUMIMASEN—[SOO-me-mah-sen] "Excuse me" or "I'm sorry."
YAKYUU—[YAH-kyoo] Baseball. Just as popular in Japan as it is here—in fact, maybe more so! ■ TR

CULTURE SHOCKER

WHY THE JAPANESE DO THOSE WEIRD THINGS THEY DO

EVANGELION

Why do Japanese people sleep on the floor? Well, a "futon" isn't as uncomfortable as you might think, for one thing. The [illegible], the "mattress" you lay on, is stuffed with cotton batting. It's harder than a Western mattress, but sleeping on hard surfaces is said to be better for your back. Also, the futon serves a practical function—it rolls up and can be put away during the day, which gives you more space. That's no small concern, especially in areas where space is at a premium. ■ TR

#16, "Speak Like A Child," where Faye gets that tape she made as a kid.

I just hope it doesn't get to a point where we all get a tiny chip surgically implanted in our heads to instantly download the memory of watching a particular anime.

Phil
via cyberspace

Personally, I can't wait until we get those little chips. That way I can watch anime while I'm waiting in line at the grocery store, or something equally as boring. Like when I'm at work.

I can't disagree that nostalgia has its place, but I recently watched a videotape I made back in 1987, and let me tell you, Tiffany videos look like crap after 16 years. Discs are much more permanent and far more practical.

GOUDA!
KRILLIN

BRIE!
BUSCEMI

DEAR A.I.,

Here are my picks for a live-action *Dragon Ball Z* movie:

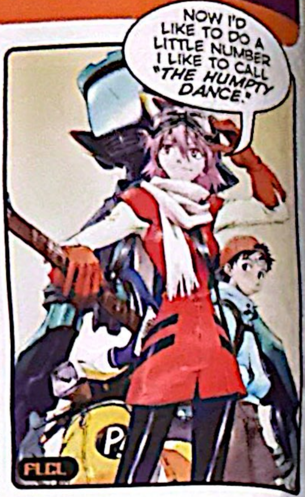
Goku: Paul Walker
Vegeta: Colin Farrell
Piccolo: Laurence Fishburne
Gohan: Kerr Smith
Krillin: Steve Buscemi
Bulma: Ashley Judd
Frieza: Joaquin Phoenix
Super Buu: Brock Lesnar

Gregory Morton
Chicago, IL

Steve Buscemi gets to play the short, ugly, bald guy? He's gonna be thrilled.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I saw a photo of someone with the *FLCL* guitar in a magazine. I went to my local mall and a few comic stores to see if they have them, since I'm a huge *FLCL* fan. Where can I buy a guitar like that (if the person didn't make it himself)?


NOW I'D LIKE TO DO A LITTLE NUMBER I LIKE TO CALL "THE HUMPTY DANCE."
FLCL

Peter
via cyberspace

The guitar Haruko swings around is based on a real instrument—a left-handed 4003 series Rickenbacker electric bass. You can pick one up for $1,500 or so, but you'll have to install your own pull-start engine.

Or, for about a buck's worth of supplies, you could make your own out of cardboard. Results may vary.

Actually, that sounds kind of fun! Now that "Animail" is all finished, I'm going to go get some cardboard and build my own Monkey D. Luffy hat! Will the kids at the mall think it's cool?

—Tom Root

Other Tom Root art projects include an EVA Unit made out of soup cans and Doraemon carved out of cheese.

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--Play Magazine
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BANDAI

SPEEDLINES

FAST FORWARD THROUGH THE 'ANIME INSIDER' LIFESTYLE

MERRY KURISUMASU

How Do the Japanese Celebrate the Holidays? By Working!

HAIJU CHRISTMAS Santa's got some stiff competition when it comes to spreading holiday cheer in Japan.

If you've ever watched an anime Christmas special, you'll have noticed it doesn't look very familiar. The emphasis is on romance rather than family, and there's not a turkey dinner to be seen. While Christmas entered Japan with Christianity, it's been adapted to their particular tastes.

NO VACATION The Japanese year is full of national holidays, but neither Christmas Eve nor Christmas qualify. It's just another workday, the poor folks.

CHICKEN OUT While Christmas dinner isn't exactly a tradition, KFC—yep, the fast food chain—has somehow convinced the Japanese people that fried chicken is a staple of the American holiday season. The Colonel gets tons of customers all through the holidays.

LET IT SNOW Instead of a family dinner, Christmas is the perfect time for Japanese couples to go on mega-dates! Boys have to lavish their girls with expensive meals at fine restaurants and a whole night on the town. Guys can easily spend $500 American on their significant others!

EAT IT TOO Santa doesn't get any cookies. Accompanying that bucket of Original Recipe chicken is a Christmas Cake, an annual Japanese food tradition! It's usually a cream-topped sponge cake, which needs to be ordered from bakeries far in advance.

LIGHT IT UP There are Christmas displays at stores large and small, where Christmas carols play continuously. Christmas lights are seen on many buildings and trees, but not houses.

LOVE YOU TOO These plenty of holiday music to go around, but they aren't Christmas carols. Most Christmas songs crooned by Japanese music artists are love songs, usually recorded in English, not Japanese! ■ Jenni Bomford

YUMMI YUGI?

LET'S WAKE UP WITH 'YU-GI-OH!' IN OUR TUMMY

Mmmm, boy, am I lucky! Instead of a paycheck this month, I, managing editor Robert Bricken, was offered either a four week's supply of the new *Yu-Gi-Oh!* Go-Gurt or the new *Yu-Gi-Oh!* cereal. Heck, how can I pick just one breakfast blast, starring my favorite King of Games, Yami Yugi? I snuck a snack and picked my destiny... ■ RB

YU-GI-OH! GO-GURT

While Yugi's yogurt in a tube may taste like any other melon or cotton candy-flavored yogurt in a tube, the lack of a spoon ruins the whole experience. I feel like I'm squirting a huge tube of fruity toothpaste in my mouth, and I was living with yogurt burps for the rest of the day. Only for the berry brave. Rating:

THE ONLY CEREAL THAT TASTES LIKE TRADING CARDS!
Yu-Gi-Oh!
CEREAL

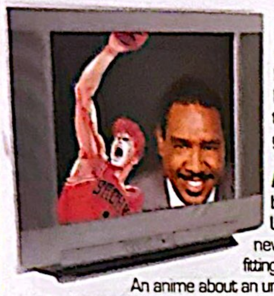
YU-GI-OH! CEREAL

Don't be put off by the eye-blowing package—*Yu-Gi-Oh!* cereal is all right. But so is Captain Crunch, and that's exactly what *Yu-Gi-Oh!* cereal tastes like. The cereal is a pile of slightly sweetened triangle-shaped corn puffs, supposedly shaped like Yugi's Millennium Medallion. Watch out—if you eat too much, you get dizzy and your mouth feels like you ate sandpaper. Perfect! Rating:

CRYSTAL BALL 2

What Will 2004 Hold For Anime Fans? Our Semi-Educated Guesses May Surprise You!

ROCK ME, MIYAZAKI! Importing hot anime soundtracks made fans—previously forced to buy bootlegs—very happy. But the modern way to get music is by downloading it off the Internet. Watch for anime soundtrack importers to offer music downloads from their Web sites for a nominal fee.



SAYONARA, JAPAN As more and more companies snap up all the Japanese anime they look for a lot of anime distributors to Korea or China for their animated fare. tiny trickle of Korean anime we've started get is going to start flowing heavily.

STRAWBERRY
Pocky

PRIME DUNK From the bottom of the ratings gutter, UPN's gotta try something new. Something hot, but still fitting in their urban demographic. An anime about an urban sport, perhaps? Could this li'l network get their balls on the court to air the basketball hit *Slam Dunk* after *The Parkers*? Perhaps, if we were in charge.

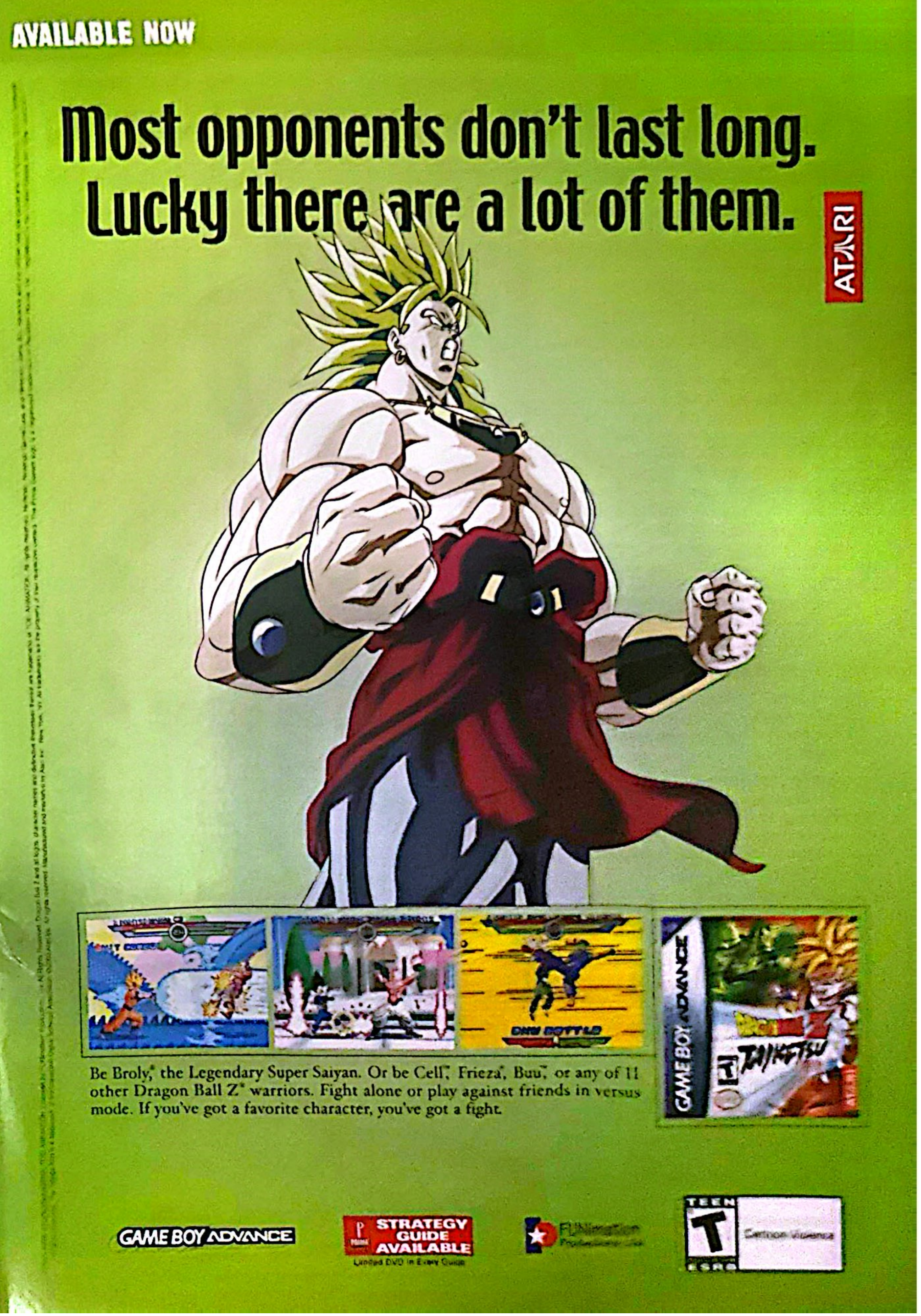
AD-LICIOUS After starting a television network, developing a live-action film and introducing divisions in manga, music and merchandise, expansion-hungry ADV Films is going to import Japanese snacks and candies. Get ready for ADV-Pocky, ADV-Mochi and ADV-Ramune! ■ RB & Doug Goldstein

BY THE NUMBERS

THE FACTS AND FIGURES THAT RULE OUR LIVES

WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH OUR OLD ANIME VHS TAPES?

- Giving them to people who still own 8-tracks
- Melting down 'em, filling potholes with the goo
- Sending 'em to that kid we sponsor in Africa
- Recording all of Telemundo for posterity
- Confusing young kids who don't know what VCRs are
- Unrolling them and using the tape to strangle enemy ninjas
- Building an uncomfortable chair
- Throwing 'em out



AVAILABLE NOW

Most opponents don't last long. Lucky there are a lot of them.

ATARI

Be Broly,® the Legendary Super Saiyan. Or be Cell,™ Frieza,® Buu,™ or any of 11 other Dragon Ball Z® warriors. Fight alone or play against friends in versus mode. If you've got a favorite character, you've got a fight.

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TEEN
T
ESRB
Cartoon Violence

HELLO, BATHROOM!

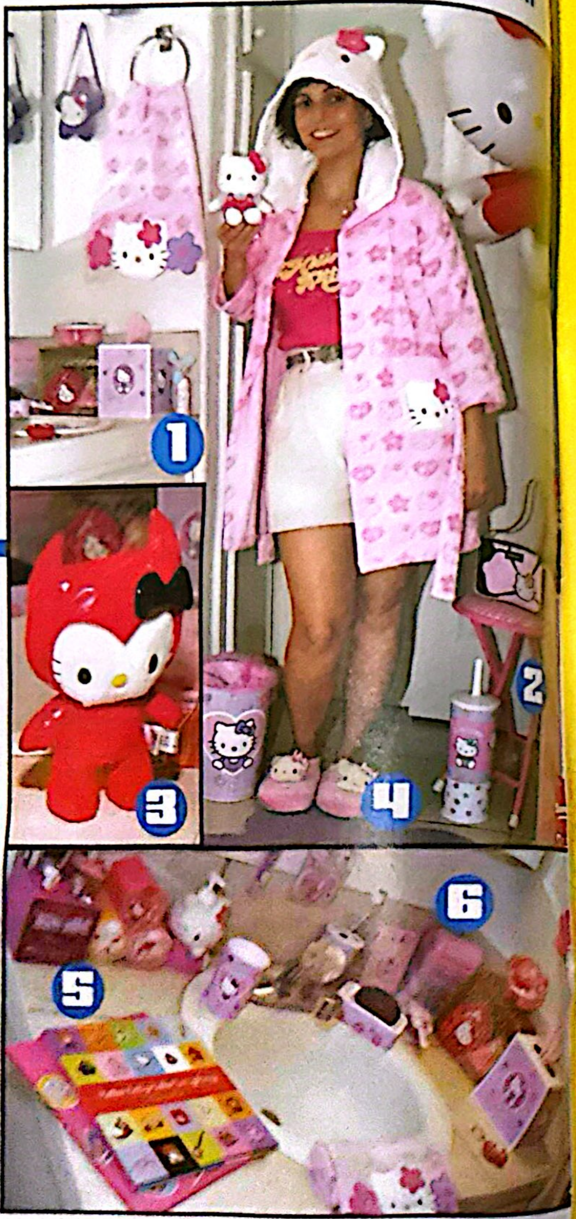
How Hello Kitty Commandeered a Voice Actress' Bathroom

You may already know that Tiffany Grant is the voice of Asuka from *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. What you might not know is that she's a Hello Kitty nut. In fact, Grant loves Hello Kitty so much that she designed an entire bathroom in her Houston, Texas apartment with Hello Kitty!

A Sanrio fan for 10 years, the bathroom project started this past May after her marriage to ADV Vice-President Matt Greenfield, when they were redeeming gift certificates from Bed, Bath & Beyond. "It was my *husband* who said 'Hey, they have all this Hello Kitty stuff!' Once I got a little bit, I thought 'Well, this isn't Kitty *enough*,'" Grant recalls with a laugh.

Grant's filled her bathroom with over 50 Hello Kitty knick-knacks, not including hair clips and lipstick and shows no sign of stopping.

But why so much Hello Kitty? "I don't like to get up in the morning," Grant explains. "So when I get ready in my Hello Kitty bathroom, I feel very happy and cheerful! I really get a kick out of being around such cute and pretty things." ■ Trisha L. Sebastian



1 FAN-ATIC "One of my favorite things to use is this little personal fan. I use it in the summertime right when I get out of the shower because Texas is so steamy and hot."

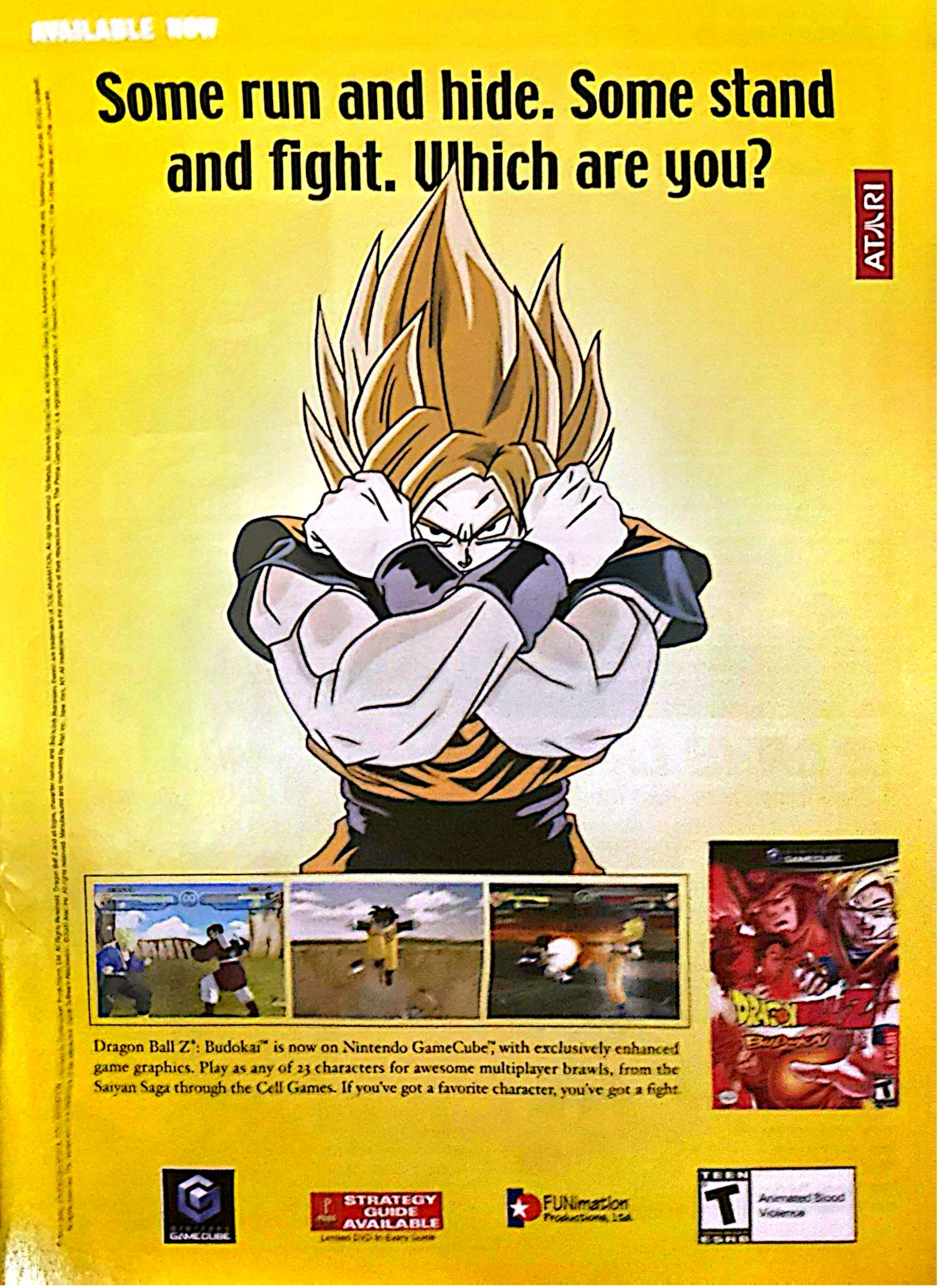
2 BEST BUY? "My favorite thing is this little wooden cabinet I got on sale because it was damaged. I realized the top needed to be repainted, so I took it to the Sherwin Williams store and said, 'I *need* you to match this paint!' I spent $20 on repairs, which is more than I saved!"

3 NEON GENESIS KITTY "I want to take this Devil Kitty and turn it into a plug suit like Asuka's from *Evangelion*."

4 THE OTHER FOOT "I was so excited to get these slippers, because they're actually in my size! They're quite fabulous. A lot of the ADV sound booths are really cold, so one day I took off my regular shoes, put these on and I actually recorded a show wearing my Hello Kitty slippers."

5 HELLO, BIRTHDAY! "In this set of drawers, there's a Hello Kitty on a spaceship that used to have candy in it. When you push a button, it plays music and lights up. I admit, I played it to myself on my birthday recently."

6 STARRY MEMORIES "I remember the Little Twin Stars from when I was eight, so I was very excited to see the mirror and little trash can set because it brought me back to my youth."



AVAILABLE NOW

Some run and hide. Some stand and fight. Which are you?

Dragon Ball Z®: Budokai™ is now on Nintendo GameCube™, with exclusively enhanced game graphics. Play as any of 23 characters for awesome multiplayer brawls, from the Saiyan Saga through the Cell Games. If you've got a favorite character, you've got a fight.

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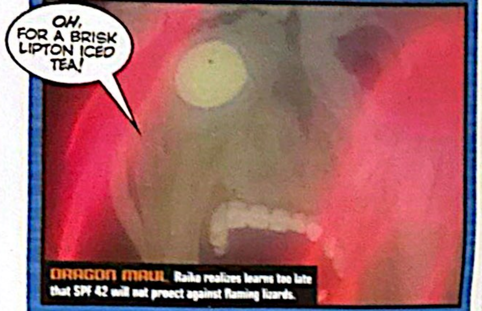
TEEN T ESRB Animated Blood Violence

DEATH OF THE MONTH

RAIKO FROM 'YU YU HAKUSHO: POLTERGEIST REPORT'


OH, FOR A BRISK LIPTON ICED TEA!

DRAGON MAUL Raiko realizes learns too late that SPF 42 will not proect against flaming lizards.

Raiko, a general for the Netherworld, can't defeat Spirit Detective Hiei on a one-on-one battle—but he *can* make him switch sides! Using his own evil eye's ability of drawing out Hiei's dark side, Raiko opens up dozens of evil eyes in Hiei. The move unlocks all of his latent power and unleashes not one, but *six* Black Dragon Spirit Waves! Raiko orders the death of the other spirit detectives, but he's underestimated Hiei, who quickly regains control of himself and the energy dragons. Hiei turns the monsters on his would-be possessor, and all Raiko can do is stare in horror as the six unstoppable plasma dragons crush everything in their path on their way to slamming into him, then start chewing. One order of Flaming Raiko Lizard Food, coming up! ■ Miguel A. E. Betita

12 DAYS LATER

A Christmas Carol Just for Otaku!

Those tired old Christmas carols just don't cut it with today's anime fans! When you're going door-to-door spreading cheer around the neighborhood this year, whip out this new instant classic. ■ Tom Root

OTAKU NO KURISUMASU NO JYUUNI-NITI

(THE 12 DAYS OF OTAKU CHRISTMAS)

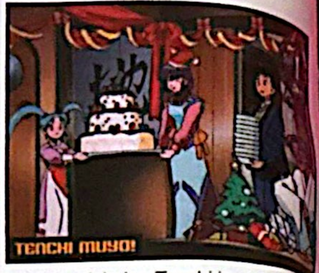
On the 12th day of Christmas my true love gave to me...
Twelve Slayers slaying
Eleven sexy schoolgirls
Ten seiyuu dubbing
Nine Squirtles squirting
Eight bowls of ramen
Seven Balls of Dragons
Six noses bleeding
Kaaaa-neeeee-daaaaa!
Four talking cats
Three French thieves
Two Ranma forms
And a mouthful of chocolate Pocky!

GOKU

HOLIDAZED

Anime's Craziest Holiday Gifts Include...

...AN ILLEGIMATE CHILD!



TENCHI MUYO!

Ayeka and Ryoko stop fighting over Tenchi to celebrate the Jurai holiday of Startica, which is quite like Christmas. But which guest is worse—the old enemy of Grandpa's who comes looking for revenge or the new girl who shows up claiming Tenchi is...her father? (*Tenchi Muyo!*)

...HYPOTHERMIA!

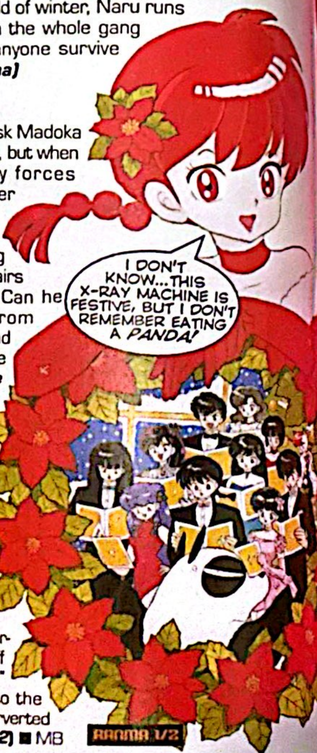
Superstition says that if you kiss your favorite girl at the Rainbow Bridge, you'll be together forever. However, Keitaro's got a cast on his leg from yet another accident, and he's just seen Naru give a gift...to his rival Seta! Keitaro runs out into the cold of winter, Naru runs after him, and then the whole gang gives chase. Will anyone survive the cold? ***(Love Hina)***

...A TIME WARP!

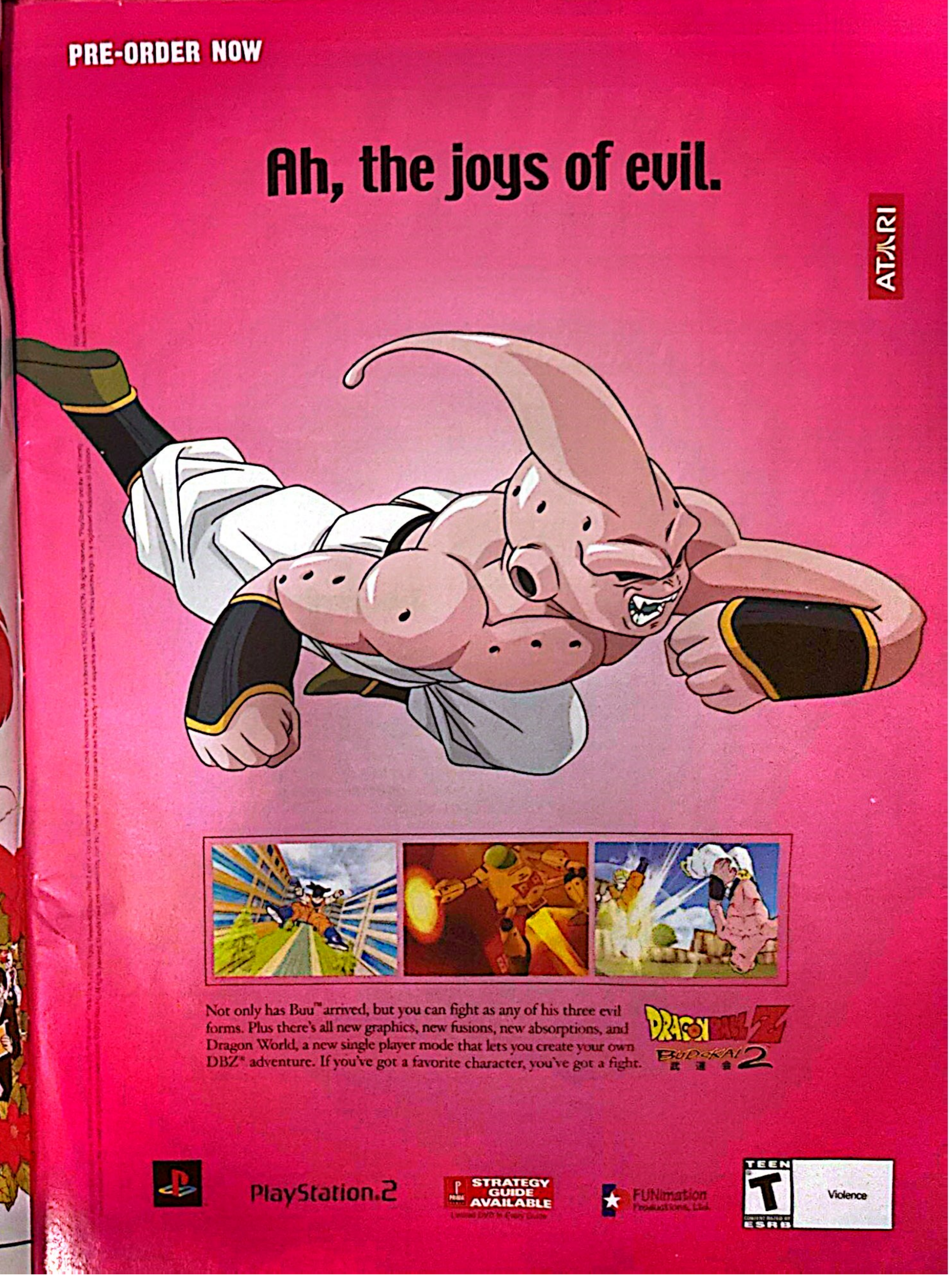
Kyosuke wants to ask Madoka to a Christmas party, but when Hikaru practically forces Kyosuke to take her instead, everything goes wrong for him that night, including falling down the stairs and back in time! Can he prevent history from repeating itself, and make everyone happy? (***Kimagure Orange Road***)

...PIMPING!

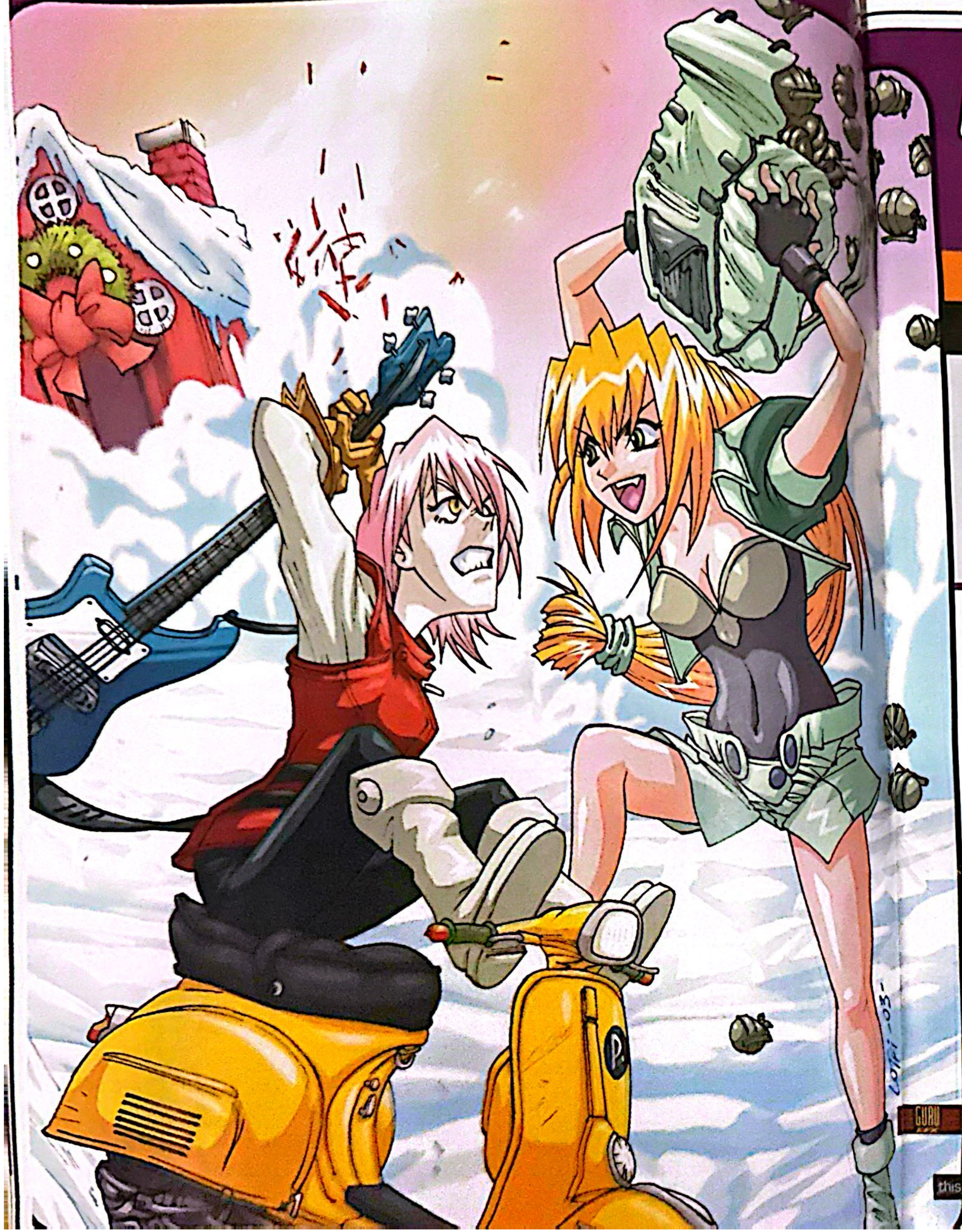
Having some of the world's craziest and most powerful martial artists over for a Christmas party is not a good idea, as they tend to fight each other. In the chaos, the nefarious Nabiki auctions off special "quality time" with male Ranma to the highest and most perverted bidders! (***Ranma 1/2***) ■ MB


I DON'T KNOW...THIS X-RAY MACHINE IS FESTIVE, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER EATING A *PANDA*!

RANMA 1/2



Not only has Buu™ arrived, but you can fight as any of his three evil forms. Plus there's all new graphics, new fusions, new absorptions, and Dragon World, a new single player mode that lets you create your own DBZ® adventure. If you've got a favorite character, you've got a fight.



BY TOM ROOT

LAST MAN STANDING

A BATTLE YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER SEE

EXCEL EXCEL VS. HARUKO HARUHARA

Excel		Haruko
18	AGE	19
Japanese	NATIONALITY	Alien
ACROSS agent	DAY JOB	Housekeeper
Shrill speaking voice	WEAPON	Rickenbacker bass guitar
Her pet/ meal Menchi	ACCESSORIES	Yellow Vespa scooter

EXCEL: Straight out of high school, *Excel Saga*'s title character joined the sinister and vaguely defined ACROSS organization, which plans to take over the world—one small city at a time. Slavishly devoted to her boss Lord Ilpalazzo, Excel performs her missions with unmatched gusto...but never success.

HARUKO HARUHARA: *FLCL*'s enigma wrapped in a mystery wrapped in a cuckoo clock, Haruko is an alien who enjoys smashing into people on her Vespa scooter. An unpredictable combatant who often dresses like a nurse, weird stuff seems to happen when she's around—and that's not counting what happens when she hits people with her guitar!

THE BATTLE BEGINS

It's Christmas Eve, and Santa's Village at the F City mall is doing booming business. But unbeknownst to Santa or the line of eager children, crouched inside Santa's Workshop is a very unwelcome guest—Excel!

"People spend way too much time on this holiday!" she declares. "Therefore, Lord Ilpalazzo has determined that by eliminating Christmas, people will be forced to devote all their energies to the ideals of ACROSS!" The logic seems shaky but Excel pays no heed. "I must destroy Santa Claus!"

But then Excel hears the roar of an engine and people screaming. She peers out of the Workshop window to see a grinning girl on a Vespa scooter zooming straight for her, swinging a bass guitar. Excel has time only to shriek and duck before the entire Workshop is splintered into a million pieces with a mighty crash.

When Excel opens her eyes, she notices her hiding place is gone. "Good thing you ducked!" Haruko yells. "That would have hurt!" She turns the scooter around for another try, scattering children in her wake. Excel yelps and starts running in the opposite direction, grabbing her Santa-snuffing, grenade-filled knapsack. Haruko yanks the ripcord on her internal combustion Rickenbacker bass and steering the scooter with her feet, takes a big swing at Excel's head.

Luckily, Excel trips over her own feet just as Haruko swats at Excel's skull, narrowly missing. "How can I knock your head off if you don't stop ducking?" Haruko protests. "Quack, quack!"

Excel scrambles to her feet and runs but soon finds herself trapped in a dead end. Seeing Haruko roaring towards her, Excel finally remembers her knapsack.

"The tables have turned!" she cackles. "Enjoy your presents!" She starts pulling pins out of her grenades and throwing them at Haruko. Suddenly Excel notices that the pins are bouncing harmlessly off Haruko, while at her feet is a pile of grenades with no pins.

"That is such an old joke..." Excel laments, just before the incredibly loud explosions begin.

THE WINNAH:

Utterly defeated and lying in a charred heap, Excel has just enough strength to lift her head and ask, "Miss Scooter-sama? [*Cough*] Why do you want to hit me with your guitar?"

"I usually do it for business," Haruko shrugs, then grins evilly. "This time, it's for the *kicks*. Now hold still..."

Are there any cataclysmic anime match-ups you'd like to see on these pages? Let us know at Animeinsider@aol.com now!

this month's battle drawn by SAM LOTFI

END OF AN EVA

ARMAGEDDON HAS COME AND YOU KNOW IT NOT! PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE SECRETS OF THE EVANGELION APOCALYPSE

BY TALIESIN JAFFE AND ROBERT BRICKEN

It's the end of the world as you *don't* know it.

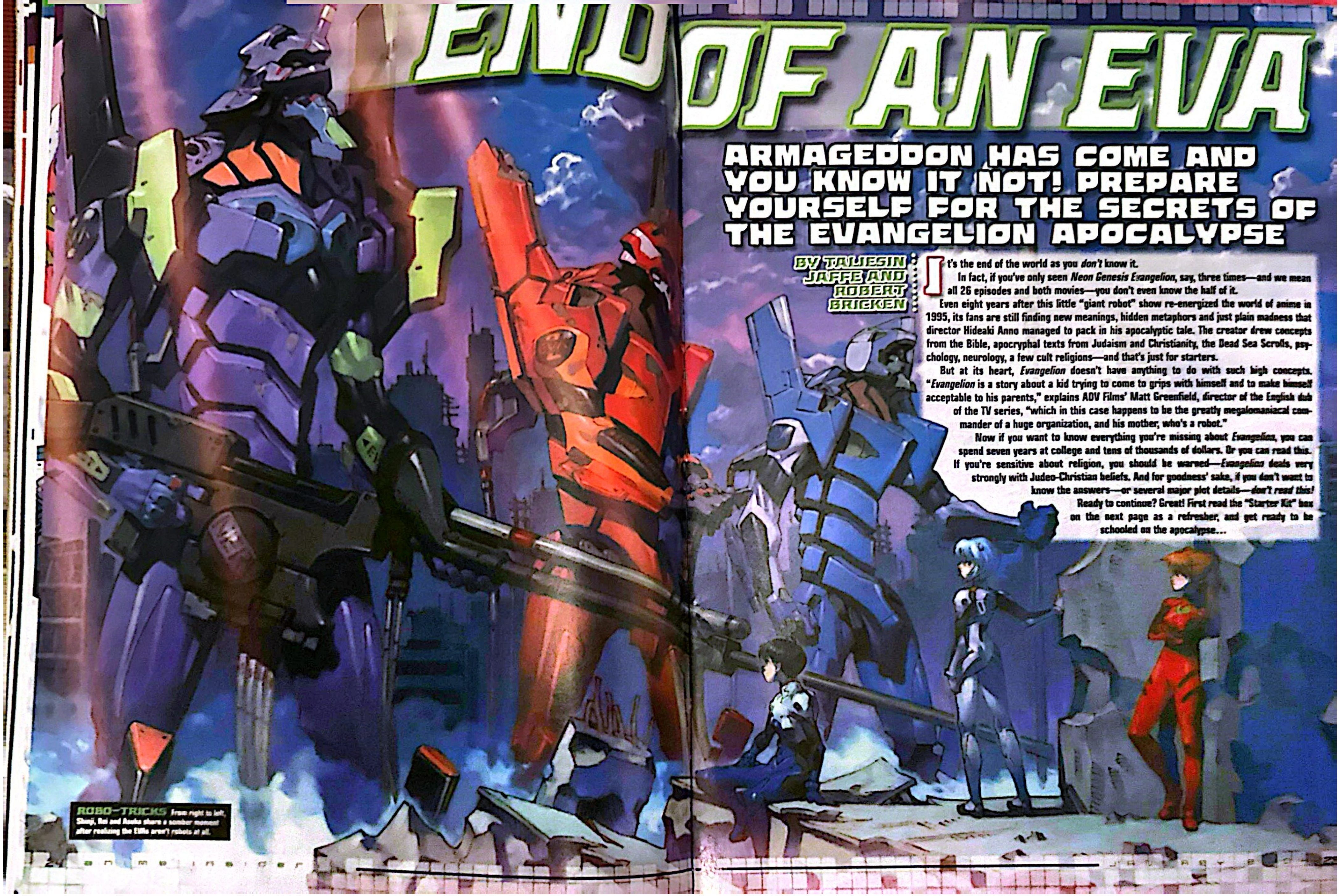
In fact, if you've only seen *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, say, three times—and we mean all 26 episodes and both movies—you don't even know the half of it.

Even eight years after this little "giant robot" show re-energized the world of anime in 1995, its fans are still finding new meanings, hidden metaphors and just plain madness that director Hideaki Anno managed to pack in his apocalyptic tale. The creator drew concepts from the Bible, apocryphal texts from Judaism and Christianity, the Dead Sea Scrolls, psychology, neurology, a few cult religions—and that's just for starters.

But at its heart, *Evangelion* doesn't have anything to do with such high concepts. "*Evangelion* is a story about a kid trying to come to grips with himself and to make himself acceptable to his parents," explains ADV Films' Matt Greenfield, director of the English dub of the TV series, "which in this case happens to be the greatly megalomaniacal commander of a huge organization, and his mother, who's a robot."

Now if you want to know everything you're missing about *Evangelion*, you can spend seven years at college and tens of thousands of dollars. Or you can read this. If you're sensitive about religion, you should be warned—*Evangelion* deals very strongly with Judeo-Christian beliefs. And for goodness' sake, if you don't want to know the answers—or several major plot details—*don't read this!*

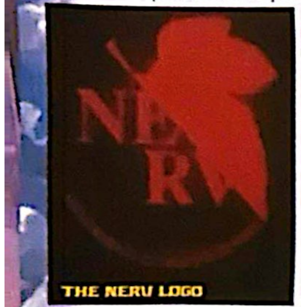
Ready to continue? Great! First read the "Starter Kit" box on the next page as a refresher, and get ready to be schooled on the apocalypse…



ROBO-TRICKS From right to left, Shinji, Rei and Asuka share a somber moment after realizing the EVAs aren't robots at all.

NERV BEGINNINGS

Did you ever stop to think what NERV's leaf-based logo really means? It bears the quote "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world." But nothing could be farther from the truth.


THE NERV LOGO

The quote is from a poem called "Pippa Passes" by Robert Browning, a 19th century English poet. In the poem, Pippa says the phrase because she is happy with the world around her, no matter how mean or cruel the world actually is.

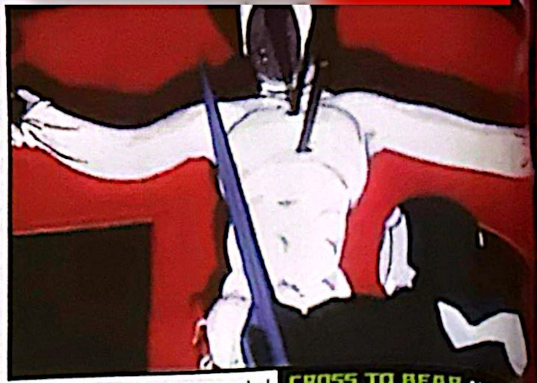
According to Greenfield, NERV uses it because, "It's basically stating the fundamental essence of the show in which God or enlightenment...is removed from the body. That is, God is in His heaven; He is not here with us."

NERV's logo uses more than the quote—the upper-left half is a fig leaf. The fig leaf is a symbol of original sin in Judeo-Christian belief. In the Bible, God told Adam and Eve that they could eat from any tree but the Tree of Knowledge. When they ate from the tree anyway, they gained the wisdom of right and wrong; realizing they were naked, they covered themselves with fig leaves.

The fig leaf represents humanity's fall from grace, but also its knowledge—perfectly epitomized by NERV, who's using its knowledge to counteract God.

BET YOUR WIFE

In episode 24, Kaworu calls humans "Lilim," and that's not a nice thing to say.


CROSS TO BEAR Adam's wife Lilith waits to be touched by an angel.

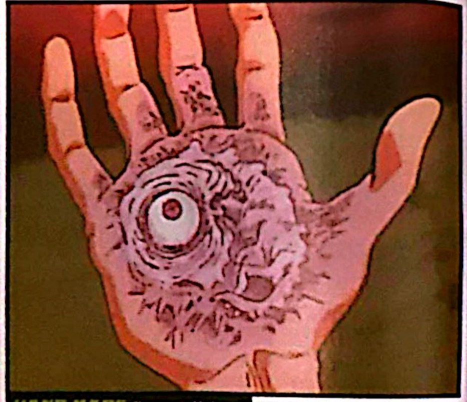
According to apocryphal texts of Judaism and Christianity, Adam had a wife before Eve. Lilith was an independent human, not made from Adam. When she refused to be subservient to him, she was banished from the Garden of Eden. She then went off to have kids with either Lucifer or Cain, depending on which text you choose.

"Kaworu [the 17th Angel] realizes the human race is not descended from Adam, as was thought, but from Lilith," says Greenfield. "So we're *all* Lilim." As explained in *Bulfinch's Mythology*, the Lilim were early Christians' way of explaining monsters from other myths, like the Cyclops and Minotaurs in Greek mythology.

ALPHA AND OMEGA

Ever wonder why Gendo always wears gloves? It's not because he's cold; it's because he's grafted the embryo of Adam himself in his own hand.

In episode 24, Kaworu says that the Angels and humanity are fighting for a future only one of them can have. To win, all the Angels need is to find Adam. Gendo and NERV used Lilith—Adam's first wife, and rumored to be the second Angel (Anno has never made it certain) as a decoy to the Angels. That's also why Gendo leaves Tokyo-3 when the Angels get too close sometimes.


HAND MADE No amount of lotion will smooth Gendo's hand — he put Adam in there!

STARTER KIT

THE TEN THINGS YOU GOTTA KNOW FIRST

1. In 2015, monsters called Angels (most of them huge) are attacking the Earth.
2. Most of humanity doesn't know that it's us versus the Angels in a fight to extinction.
3. An agency called NERV, run by Gendo Ikari, is in charge of stopping the Angels.
4. They plan to use giant, human-driven bio-constructions called Evangelions (or EVAs) to stop 'em.
5. Only 14-year-old kids can pilot the EVAs; the third pilot is Shinji Ikari, Gendo's son.
6. Most of the stuff in the Judeo-Christian religion is real—and a lot more besides.
7. The Dead Sea Scrolls prophesized humanity's extinction, but NERV is using them to cheat fate.
8. If the Angels find Adam (of Adam and Eve fame), humanity will be destroyed.
9. NERV found Lilith, Adam's first wife, and developed the EVAs from her.
10. This is all pretty cool. ■ Robert Bricken

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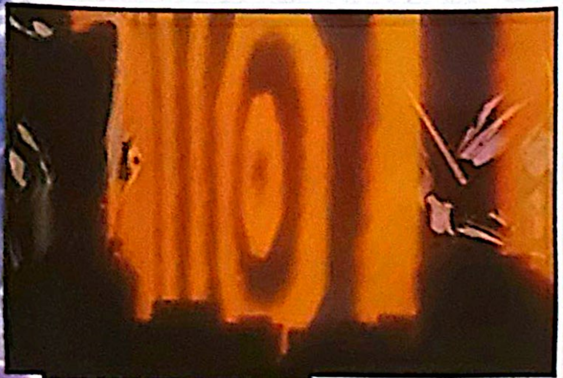
TERROR IN THE NIGHT

Why can't they just shoot Angels with normal weapons? Because of the Absolute Terror Field, usually called the AT Field. The AT Field is a force field that the Angels use to protect themselves, but can also use as a weapon.



BACK TO THE WALL Both the Angels and the EVA pilots can manifest AT fields.

The AT Field wasn't Anno's idea, though. It was conceived by the famous 19th century psychologist Sigmud Freud, and later developed by his student William Reich, known for studying children traumatized by parental abandonment. In their theory, Absolute Terror is a psychological barrier a child would create around himself if he or she grew up without strong, loving parental figures. This barrier keeps other people at an emotional distance.

In *Evangelion*, explains Greenfield, "Every human being actually has an AT Field. It is the wall of the soul. But the thing is, most people don't know how to use this. They simply *have* it." But the Angels use their AT Field as boundaries too—as barriers no conventional weapons can pierce. Only the three EVA pilots Rei, Asuka, and Shinji—who were raised without strong parental figures—have strong enough AT Fields to fight the Angels.

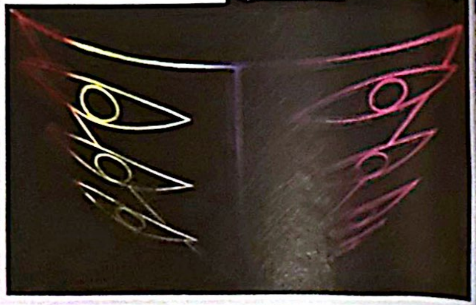
Even mo… …ing the s… on Earth is SEELE, a super-secret organiz… trying to change humanity's destiny. Using the apo… lyptically prophetic Dead Sea Scrolls, they're chan… events to start the Human Complementat… Project which will unite all souls into a sing… consciousness.

This is flying in the face of what God has ordain… in the Scrolls. But SEELE clearly has divine aspi… tions; it can even be seen in their logo—an upsi… down triangle covered by seven eyes.

"If you go back to the Old Testament, Yahw… is said to have seven eyes," says Greenfie… Throughout the New Testament as well, seve… is a very divine number in the Bible, oft… showing up when God manifests His Will, like … this quote:

> *And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.*
> (Revelations 5:6)

Since the God in *Evangelion* seems to want to do in humanity, SEELE is ready to take over God's plan.



EYE SORE Just like the SEELE logo seen below, the three main EVAs have seven eyes between them!

EVERYBODY DIES!

UH...WE MEAN SPOILER ALERT!

Nearly everyone in *Evangelion* meets a horrible and messy end, and we're more than happy to bring you the gruesome details—ranked for style and substance (by which we mean mess).

[illegible]—The 17th Angel and the nicest guy in the series, Kaoru asks Shinji to kill him. Shinji obliges, using his EVA to pop his head off like a Pez dispenser. ★★★

MISATO KATSURAGI—When SEELE sends an army to take over NERV, Major Katsuragi takes a few rounds in the gut. She just barely manages to get Shinji to safety when she gets hit by an anti-personnel rocket. ★★★1/2

DR. [illegible]—NERV's head scientist gets mad at Gendo and tries to reprogram the Magi computers to blow up NERV headquarters. Unfortunately, the Magi like Gendo better, and he puts a bullet through Ritsuko's head. ★★

ASUKA LANGLEY SORYU—NERV's red-headed EVA pilot defeats nine SEELE-sent Mass-Production EVAs, but her EVA's battery runs out and the others return to tear her to pieces. ★★★★

GENDO IKARI—Master manipulator, NERV commander and Shinji's dad Gendo Ikari has a final realization—perhaps he *wasn't* the best father—as he is crushed in the jaws of his son's EVA (right). ★★★

REI AYANAMI—The albino EVA pilot Rei merges with the Angel Lilith, becomes a huge giant, and hands the future of mankind over to Shinji. When Shinji decides what to do with humanity, Rei falls apart into giant chunks which rain on the Earth. ★★★★★ ■ [illegible]

NOTE TO SELF:
WATER FAIRY MAKES LOUSY DEFENSE AGAINST GIANT PYRO DRAGON!
Culdcept... The magical card-based, land acquisition video game that has swept Japan and now has its sights set on the USA.
PlayStation 2
Culdcept
TEEN
T
ESRB
Fantasy Violence
Partial Nudity
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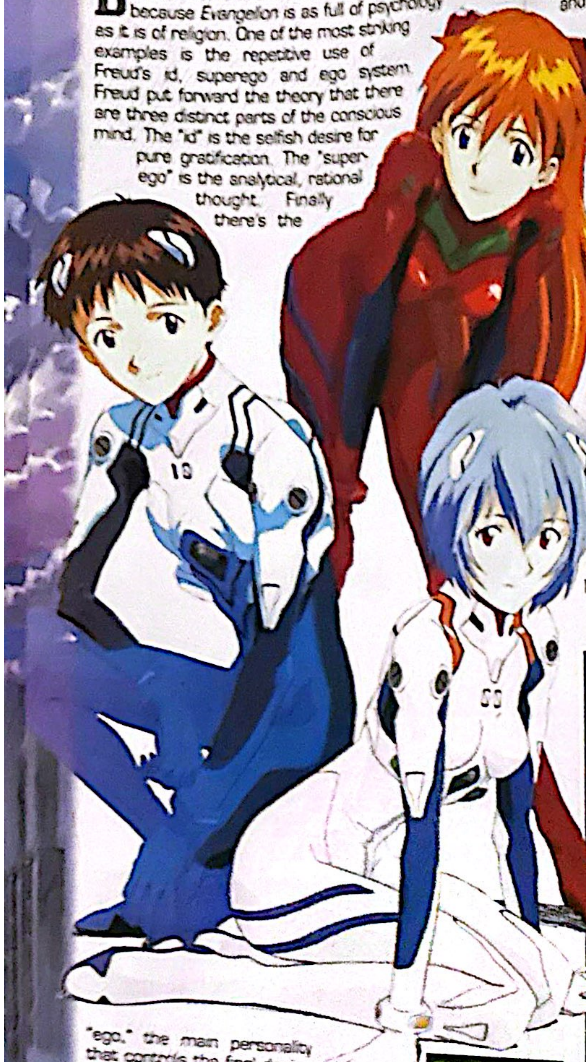
BRAIN WAVES

Director Anno must have had brains on his brain, because *Evangelion* is as full of psychology as it is of religion. One of the most striking examples is the repetitive use of Freud's id, superego and ego system. Freud put forward the theory that there are three distinct parts of the conscious mind. The "id" is the selfish desire for pure gratification. The "superego" is the analytical, rational thought. Finally there's the



"ego," the main personality that controls the final decision making process.

This triumvirate can be seen constantly through the anime, with the three EVA pilots as the best examples. Asuka, with her selfishness and egotism can easily be labeled the id. Rei, with her cold unemotional demeanor suits the superego. And finally Shinji, always questioning and trying to figure out what he's supposed to do, is the ego.

Greenfield thinks there's even stronger imagery

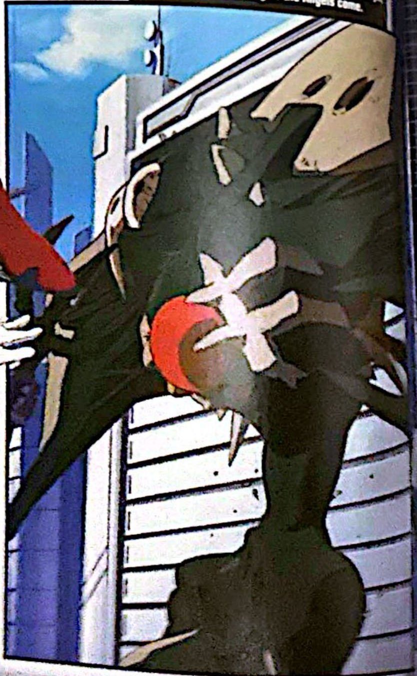
BRAIN TRUST Asuka (top), Shinji (left) & Rei each equal a part of your psyche—according to Freud.

has red horns. more primal, whether you call it the Devil or call it th and the other is more the noble, self-sacrific whether you call it the Angel or the superego.

SEND ME AN ANGEL

The Angels in *Evangelion* don't come harps or halos. Instead they're a mo assortment, ranging from the vag humanoid to the utterly bizarre.

This isn't as sacrilegious as you mi think. Angels have been historic described all sorts of ways. Some had an mal wings, some had multiple heads, some were even shaped like chariots. In th *Book of Enoch*—a scripture that used t be in the Bible until the early Christi church banned it—many angels match th same bizarre descriptions of *Evangelion's* monsters. They were described as crys talline (Ramiel, the fifth Angel), as a soft re coal glow (Ireul, the 11th Angel), and a having many sets of wings, like Lilith deve ops in *End of Evangelion*. In the Bible itself the prophet Isaiah described an angel he saw as a giant flying serpent made of light ning, which isn't a little like the DNA-strand looking Armisael, the 16th Angel.



HEAVEN SENT Sachiel, the 3rd Angel is about as normal looking as the Angels come.

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5 playable modes including 2 player VS Mode!

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM ENCOUNTERS IN SPACE

The Mobile Suits are back. This time in a battle so epic, one universe isn't enough.

TEEN T ESRB
Blood and Gore
Mild Language
Violence

As seen on CARTOON NETWORK

PlayStation 2

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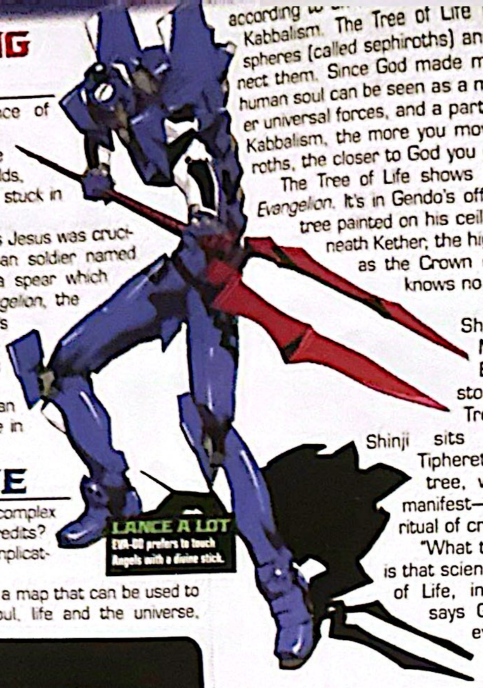
CARRY A BIG STICK

Fans may know the Lance of Longinus—the weapon EVA-00 uses to defeat the 15th Angel—can pierce AT Fields, but did you know it used to be stuck in Jesus' ribcage?

According of Christianity, as Jesus was crucified upon the cross, a Roman soldier named Longinus stabbed him with a spear which became a holy relic. In *Evangelion*, the Lance is kept buried in Lilith's chest, and is a necessary ritual object for SEELE's Human Complementation Project.

As a side note, the Vatican claims to have the real Lance in its antiquities collection!



LANCE A LOT EVA-00 prefers to touch Angels with a divine stick.

TREE HOUSE

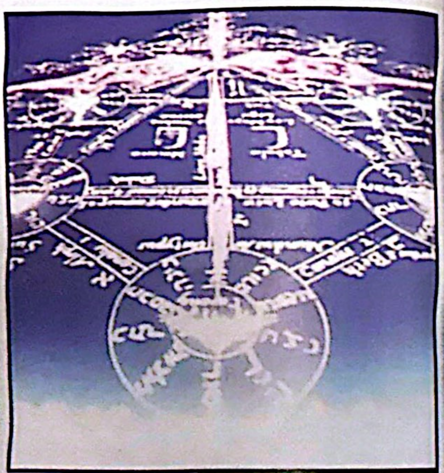
Ever wonder about that complex image in the opening credits? Explaining it is even more complicated than the design looks!

It's called the Tree of Life, a map that can be used to chart all aspects of the soul, life and the universe, according to [illegible] known as Kabbalism. The Tree of Life is a map with 10 spheres (called sephiroths) and 32 paths that connect them. Since God made man in his image, the human soul can be seen as a microcosm of the larger universal forces, and a part of God. According to Kabbalism, the more you move through the sephiroths, the closer to God you get.

The Tree of Life shows up at other times in *Evangelion*. It's in Gendo's office where he has the tree painted on his ceiling. Gendo sits underneath Kether, the highest sephiroth known as the Crown of God. His ego truly knows no bounds!

Another time is when Shinji and the nine Mass-Production EVAs sent by SEELE to stop NERV form a giant Tree of Life in the sky. Shinji sits in the sephiroth Tiphereth, the center of the tree, where God begins to manifest—and also where the ritual of crucifixion begins.

"What they're actually saying is that science is sort of the Tree of Life, in my interpretation," says Greenfield. "And that everything that NERV is doing is an attempt to use science to achieve enlightenment. In a big way, part of the joke of *Evangelion* is the fact that [for] a 'giant robot anime' that it is actually about how science is not necessarily the answer!"



CIRCLES OF LIFE When huge religious figures appear in the sky, you can stop worrying about your homework.

California-based freelance writer Taliesin Jaffe helped write the English subtitles for the Neon Genesis Evangelion movies for Manga Entertainment, so don't sass him.

CULT FOLLOWING

'EVANGELION' CREATOR HIDEAKI ANNO'S SHOCKING RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES

In March 1995, 10 members of a religious sect called Aum Shinrikyo released deadly sarin poison gas on the subways of Tokyo during rush hour. Twelve people died; thousands were injured. The attack drew worldwide attention.

ANNO

Elements from the Aum cult's violent and shocking worldview later turned up in the unlikeliest of places: *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Or perhaps it isn't so unlikely; *Evangelion* creator Hideaki Anno drew from a wide range of religions and philosophies when creating his masterpiece.

Explains ADV co-founder Matt Greenfield, currently hard at work adapting the *Evangelion* director's cut for English-speaking audiences, the parallels between Aum and *Evangelion* are prominent. *"The objective of the Aum cult was that they were going to cause a massive disaster which they would not claim responsibility for,"* Greenfield says. The motive was that countries would blame each other, leading to conflict. "Basicially [Aum] was trying to start World War III, the idea being to wipe out all human life so everything could be started over...with them, of course, being the survivors. This is actually basically what *Evangelion* is! Ultimately, it's about restarting the human race."

Was Anno himself an Aum cultist? "There's a space in his life that he doesn't talk about," Greenfield says, "but I can't say 'Yes, he was in a cult' or not."

However, Greenfield does say that the Russian-language broadcasts that Aum produced to promote its beliefs were titled *Evangelion Squad*. [illegible]

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MUST SEE TV

BECAUSE YOU DEMANDED IT—THE 102 GREATEST ANIME PICKS TO INDULGE YOUR VIEWING PLEASURES...

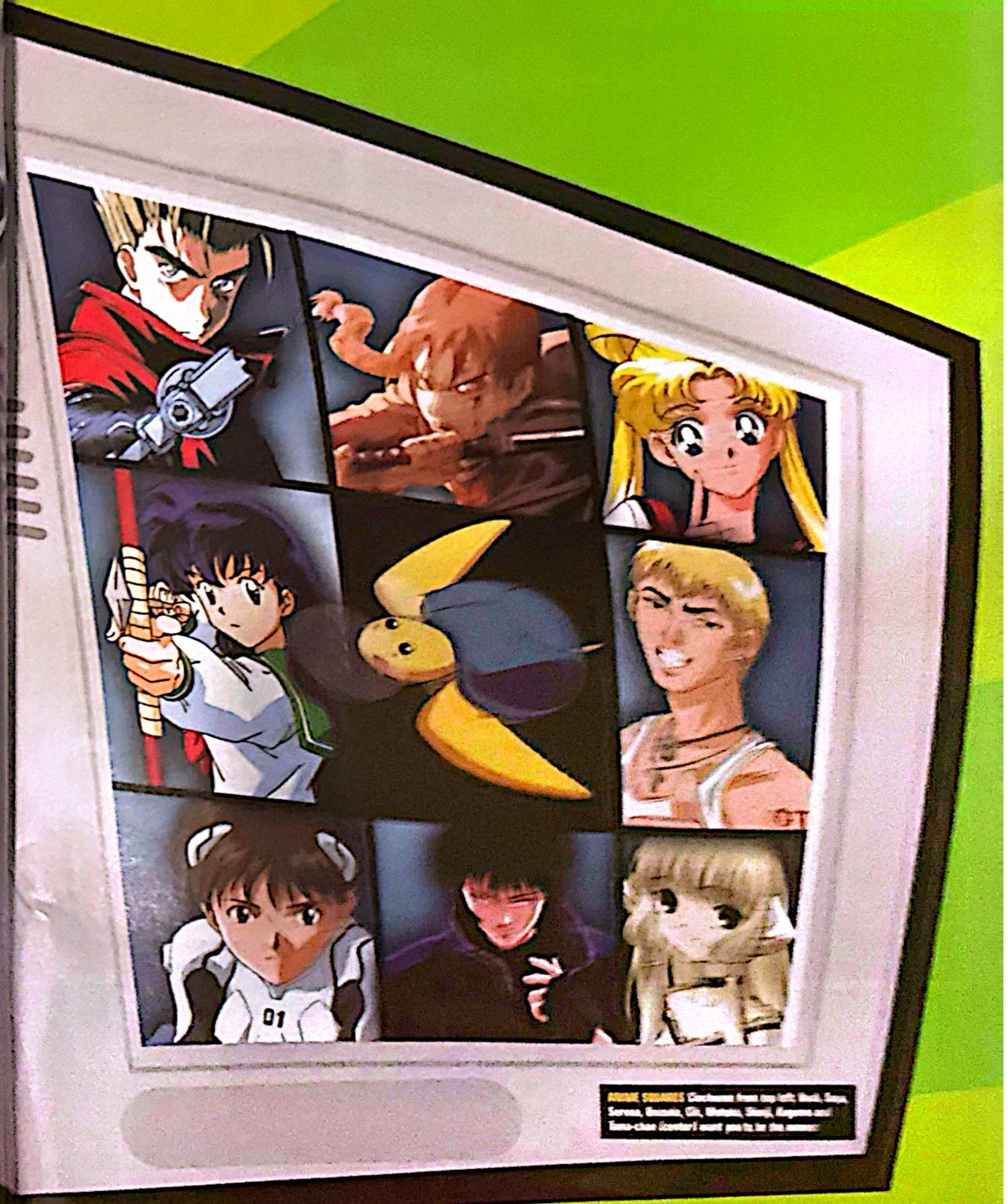
BY [illegible]

WHY DO YOU HATE US? You totally screwed us over. See, people are always writing to *Anime Insider* asking us which anime they ought to see. "Can you recommend a love story?" "What's the best giant robot series?" So we thought we'd be nice and pick the best of the best for you all.

We would be better off firing glue guns into our eyes. It would have been a lot easier than trying to narrow down the hundreds of great anime titles into the Top Three, Five or Ten. Not only did we have to consider the over 500 DVDs that were on sale just in 2003 alone, anime has a real big problem with how it defies genres. C'mon—*Ranma 1/2* turns kung fu into "Martial Arts Cooking!" Does that go in Comedy or Action? We had to enter it—and several other series—in more than one category. The ensuing fist-fights left us a little bloody, and a little winded (because we're so out of shape).

Keep in mind when sorting through the list of best romances, sci-fi epics, fantasy and more, that we picked titles that have been officially licensed for the United States, so even if some of it won't be available until next year, you can catch it all eventually. Just be careful what you watch with your little brother or sister. Some may be a li'l bit dirty. Read the warning labels.

Just don't expect us to watch them with you. At least not until you mail us a Band-Aid first.



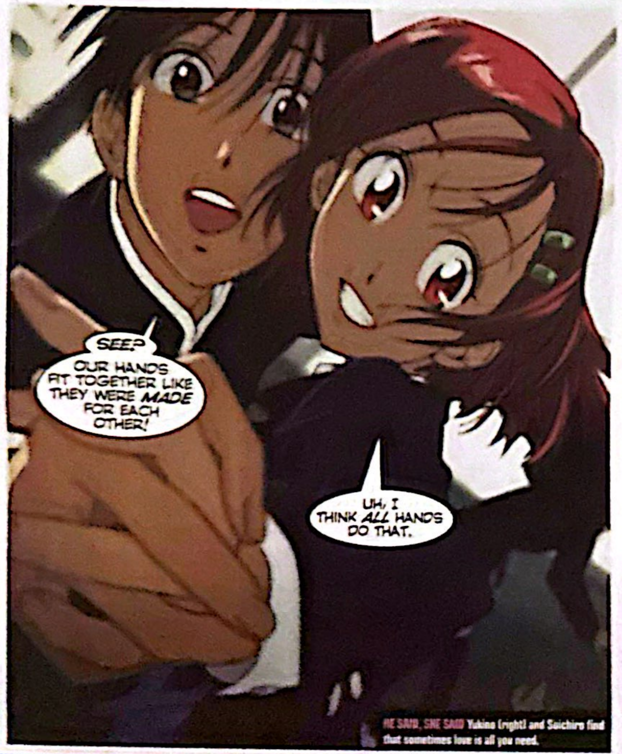
ANIME SQUARES Clockwise from top left: [illegible] Serena, [illegible] Chi, [illegible] Shinji, Kagome and [illegible] (center) want you to be the [illegible]

BEST OF AN

Boy Meets Girl? In Anime, It's Never That Simp

1 HIS & HER CIRCUMSTANCES

Love-hate? More like *hate-hate*, as straight-A class president Yukino engages in a battle of wills with her irritating but curiously attractive male rival Soichiro. Fanboy powerhouse Studio Gainax pulls every televisual trick in the book, with live-action sequences, paper-cut animation, real photographs and even a real fire. A very different, very amusing, and very clever angle on the teen trauma that forms so many anime. Like *Ally McBeal*, but actually funny. Smarter, too. (Right Stuf)


SEE? OUR HANDS FIT TOGETHER LIKE THEY WERE *MADE* FOR EACH OTHER!
UH, I THINK *ALL* HANDS DO THAT.

HE SAID, SHE SAID Yukino (right) and Soichiro find that sometimes love is all you need.

2 KIMAGURE ORANGE ROA

Eighties big hair love, in a angle be where a torn bet sophistica and a bi but stil make up his mind. And, hey, w there? Let's make him come fr family of telepaths! Bittersweet rom meets occasional psychic duels show that taught today's animat true meaning of love. (AnimEigo)

3 SAILOR MOON

Power Rangers, what have wrought? sailor-su schoolgirls to save world from queens and pretty-boys. clumsy her Serena has man of her dreams in the dash Tuxedo Mask. It's love beyond time a once and future romance is rekind A show that's not afraid to die for at least in the original Japane version. (ADV & Geneon)

4 MARMALADE BO

"Not quite incest" is a subge all its own, as quiet boy Yu falls for h new stepsister Miki after their pare swap spouses. Like a doubled-up *Brady Bunch* with new love interests every week, our would-be couples get together, break up, and get together *again*, while having to live under the same roof with the kinky parents. Multiple love triangles, heartache and drama. (TOKYOPOP)

5 LOVE HINA

Keitaro gets a dream job as the manager of an all-girl apartment building. The girls hate him, but they're stuck with him. And just think—what if one of them is his childhood sweetheart, with whom he promised to enroll at Tokyo University? Except he's failed the entrance exams twice, and he can't remember which girl she is anyway. As wacky as it is romantic, it's the fan-favorite among the "guy stuck with lots of pretty girls" genre. (Bandai)

6 MAISON IKKOKU

Although you might expect a lot of wackiness from *Ranma 1/2* and *Inu-Yasha* creator Rumiko Takahashi, *Ikkoku* surprises with gentle drama as a lonely would-be college boy falls for his widowed landlady. And with a bunch of gossipy oddball neighbors, the slightest misunderstanding can lead to broken hearts. An anime about how people really ought to say what they feel, because otherwise there can be trouble. A true gem, and an anime series that didn't overstay its welcome. (Viz)

7 CHOBITS

Magical girlfriends 21st century-style, as a penniless country boy saves humanoid computer Chi from a big-city trash pile. Soft and fluffy sci-fi from the all-girl manga team CLAMP, *Chobits* is a romance where everyone has a "persocom" computer that can take *any* form, especially cute girls. Anime love for anyone who ever wanted to sleep with their PDA, and for boys who like the idea of a girlfriend they can program, delete or upgrade. (Geneon)

8 FUSHIGI YUGI

Our top fantasy romance, as a teen girl is whisked away to a magical China-like world, where she gets magical powers and a crew of heroes to save the universe. And it wouldn't be an anime love triangle if she wasn't torn between the Emperor and her handsome knight. Tragedy and passion between two worlds, though naturally "there's no place like home." (Geneon)

9 BOYS OVER FLOWERS

Sassy schoolgirl stands up to the snooty local rich kids, only to incur their wrath, enmity and eventual respect. Realistically flawed characters make this a cut above the rest—for those who like to watch feuding foes turn into fawning fans. A show that says it's okay for girls to like boys, and that it's okay for boys to be jerks, as long as they're *deep*. (Viz)

10 GRAVITATION

Boys and their toys were never prettier. Shuichi, lead singer with the rock band Bad Luck, falls for blond novelist Yuki. Shuichi's passion adds a new frisson to proceedings—but for the girls audience this is aimed at, that only doubles the fun. Music biz intrigues ensue, along with loves requited and otherwise, and a tone that can flit from comedy to tragedy in mere moments. (Right Stuf)

PULL MY FINGER!

CLAMP IT DOWN!

Meet The Holy Quartet of Shōj

Sometimes it takes a group of women to get girls right. Sometimes it takes less women than you think. When CLAMP was first formed in 1985 as a doujinshi (fan-created manga) circle, there were 11 women in the group. By the time they published their first official work, *RG Veda*, they were down to four. The team includes Nanase Ohkawa (story, script, art design, advertising), Mokona Apapa (character design, illustration, drawing), Mick Nekoi (coloring, super-deformed characters) and Satsuki Igarashi (design, drawing assistance, Website maintenance). Of their many milestone works, including *Magic Knight Rayearth*, *Wish*, *Card Captor Sakura* and *Tsubasa: RESERVoir CHRoNiCLE*, CLAMP explores many different genres, such as fantasy or adventure, but all of them are full of great romance stories. If you like *Chobits*, make sure you check some of these other titles out! ●

LOVE & CANDY

How the Japanese Make it All More Complicated

The Japanese love to do things their own way. For Valentine's Day, they've turned it into two holidays with their own traditions! Check out love, Japanese-style.

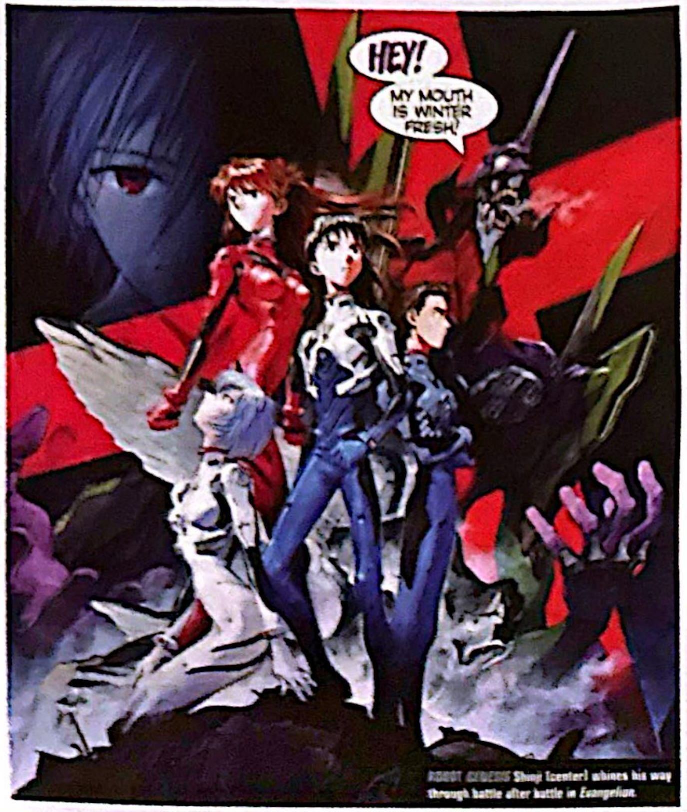
I SAID 'NO WALNUTS'!

Valentine's Day: Valentine's in Japan is celebrated mostly by teens and young women. Girls often use this time to confess their love through a gift of chocolate. The chocolate comes in two forms: giri-choco and honmei. Giri-choco is obligatory chocolate for friends and associates. Honmei is for Mr. Right, a girl's true love. Often honmei is handmade by the girl, while giri-choco is store bought. White Day: A month later on White Day, [illegible]

100-Story/Tall Fist Fights? Get a Ring[illegible]

1 NEON GENESIS EVANGELION

It's the end of the world as we know it, and Shinji doesn't feel fine at all. He's a kamikaze schoolboy forced to pilot a war machine that's an angel of pain designed by his uncaring dad. It's Hideaki Anno's groundbreaking last word on the "giant robot" genre (though technically, the EVAs are super-evolved humans). Much imitated, never bettered, this is the ultimate in angst and apocalypse. It's got Rei Ayanami in it, too. She's quite popular. (ADV)


HEY!
MY MOUTH IS WINTER FRESH!

ROBOT GENESIS Shinji (center) whines his way through battle after battle in *Evangelion*.

2 GUNDAM WIN

Five independent freedo ers team get eve the govern cabal tha damaged colonies nothing is seems. Fe ing some most amazing giant robot comba *Wing*'s alternate take on conti made it more accessible to those haven't watched the other serials within the franchise, but has an engrossing, smart, war A great point to jump aboard *Gundam* go-cart. (Bandai)

3 PATLABOR

One of the smartest, most m ing sci-fi ani *Patlabor* as what if piloti big robot w just another Superb chara ters mix offi romance, ever day drama an crime-busting with truly involving futu dilemmas. An oasis of intelligence in desert of pap, this is where the ground work was laid for anime in the 1990s—*Patlabor* movie director Mamoru Oshii would later make *Ghos in the Shell*. (Central Park Media)

OF MECHS AND MEN

Why Are Giant Robot Pilots So Damn Whiny?

Want to drive the biggest robot in town? Forget about combat skills—all you really need to know is how to whine and moan. Don't believe us? Check what these "heroes" say when faced with the dangerous task at hand. ■ Miguel A.F. [illegible]

"IMUSTN'T RUNAWAY IMUSTN'TRUN AWAYIMUSTN'T RUNAWAY!"

Shinji Ikari, *Neon Genesis Evangelion* Ep. 1

"We're nothing but fish in a barrel."
Amuro Ray, *Mobile Suit Gundam* Ep. 6

"I just... want to go back home... back to the real world."
Ayato Kamina, *RahXephon* Ep. 21

"Um, do you mind? I'm screaming like an idiot and being thrown behind the shadow of the moon."
Akito Tenkawa, *Martian Successor Nadesico* Ep. 3

"Aww! But if I fight I' scratch Alphonse!"
Noa Izumi, *Patlabor* E

4 GUNDAM SEED

There's this thing called *Gundam*. You might have heard of it. And while the plot for this latest incarnation is the same as all the others, *Seed* lifts the best from its predecessors—the five-person team of *Wing*, the CG effects of *Turn-A*, the gritty combat of *War in the Pocket*, and the drama of *Double Zeta*. For those who find the words "more of the same but better" strangely reassuring. (Bandai)

5 SUPER DIMENSIONAL FORTRESS MACROSS

Robots that can be planes, soldiers who can be lovers, songs that can be weapons—*Macross* is where pop culture met protoculture, and the ancestor of every anime music tie-in you see today. As *Robotech*, it created a generation of anime fans who had never even heard of anime, and shocked a nation when a good guy died before the end. Probably responsible for a full third of American anime fandom. (AnimEigo)

OOP! WAS THAT PARIS?
OH WELL.

6 THE BIG O

And then there was retro—anime in a deliberately old-fashioned style, here with the Art Deco stylings of *Giant Robo* and the angular characters of *Batman: the Animated Series*. Bruce Wayne lookalike Roger Smith is a detective in a city where nobody can remember a time before "the Event." What's the Event? There's your story. Gumshoe sleuthing, giant robot combat and a noir-ish twist. (Bandai)

7 VISION OF ESCAFLOWNE

Deliberately designed to appeal to both boys *and* girls, *Escaflowne* piles on the romance, the fantasy warfare and a liberal dose of knights in very large and robotic shining armor... all right, mecha. If you like your robots to have dragon-gems in their hearts and princes in their cockpits, then this is the best anime you'll ever see. And Yoko Kanno's music rocks the house. (Bandai)

8 RAHXEPHON

Conspiracies, men in black, and the human race hanging by a thread in a savage war. Yes, if anyone remembers *Megazone 23*, *The Matrix* or *Evangelion*, you know it's all been done before, but the lush color palette and attention to detail of the Bones studio make this one to watch. And remember people, war is hell—if you want robots, there are going to be tears before bedtime. (ADV)

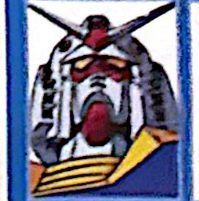
9 MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM

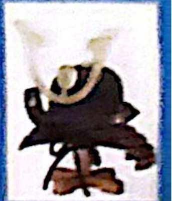
Did we mention something called *Gundam*? Before the universe was formed, before you were born, it was there. And a generation was shocked at the savage war between two similar space nations, at the embittered adversary Char Aznable, the hopeless despair of the people of Side 7 and the nascent powers of the Newtypes. So good it should be cloned...every year...by Bandai. The granddaddy of all mecha anime, and an amazing war polemic. (Bandai)

HEAD GAMES

Why Gundam's 'do Looks Like It Do

In the midst of dozens of mech series on TV in the late '70s, Yoshiyuki Tomino needed something to set *Mobile Suit Gundam* apart from the competition. He based his most recognizable creation, the RX-78-2 Gundam, on the samurai of Japan's illustrious past. Check it out!





The yellow antennae on the Gundam's head match those of the samurai's [illegible] helmet crest.

The unit's faceplate was modeled after the [illegible] Japanese war mask worn as a part of the samurai's armor.

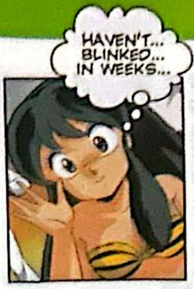
[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] ■

10 MACROSS PLUS

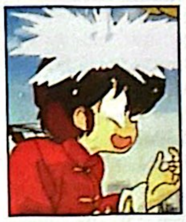
The pinnacle of the OVA art form, revamping an old show for its original fans, adding adult themes and a riff on the original. Also a forerunner of CG—the animation form that is slowly taking over the entire industry. Ironic, when you remember the plot revolves around human pilots unwilling to let computers make them obsolete. Besides, any time the music's by Yoko Kanno, the audience wins. (Manga Entertainment)


HAVEN'T... BLINKED... IN WEEKS...

Bewitched pastiche where hubby literally gets shock treatment every time he looks at another girl (which is twice a minute). In-laws who can destroy entire planets, hot alien friends, countless Japanese legends come to annoy, and a charming satire from Rumiko Takahashi that reminds us not to wish for something *too* hard, because we might just get it. (AnimEigo)

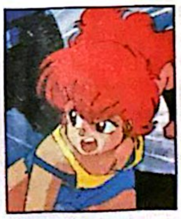
5 RANMA 1/2

The girl can't help it...if she's a boy. Cursed martial artist Ranma switches sex at inopportune moments, with a supporting cast that keeps switching *species*. Which means teen flirting, inappropriate suitors, unwelcome gender-swapping for comedic effect and slapstick pseudo-sibling rivalry that employs real sticks and real slapping! A stellar fan favorite in the U.S., where it has made Rumiko Takahashi's name as the queen of comedy. (Viz)



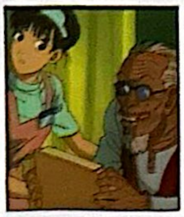
6 PROJECT A-KO

The daughter of Wonder Woman and Superman squares off against the high school rich-bitch in a contest for the affections of a lost alien princess who cries all the time. That's just a regular day for A-ko, anime's sailor-suited female answer to Jackie Chan, complete with kung-fu fighting and merciless parodies of other shows. Comedy that goes way over the top, including a school catfight that escalates into tank warfare and the scariest school girl ever (see sidebar). (Central Park Media)



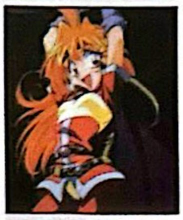
7 ROUJIN Z

Sci-fi satire from the creator of *Akira*, as an old man is caught up in a military conspiracy to turn his robot bed into the ultimate weapon. Katsuhiro Otomo takes the serious problem of Japan's aging population and offers a modest proposal—automated daycare. In *The Matrix*, that was horrific. In *Roujin-Z*, it's done for laughs, but the message remains the same. (Central Park Media)



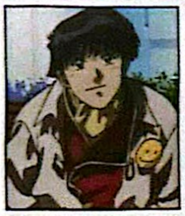
8 SLAYERS

A gang of lovable idiots blunder their way through a fantasy world with *Dungeons & Dragons*-like characters whose cranky players are arguing all the way about food, spells and bra sizes. Think *Lord of the Rings* if everyone hated hobbits, and said so. A *cartoony* anime, complete with pratfalls, comic stings and giant bumps on the head. (ADV)



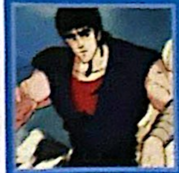
9 IRRESPONSIBLE CAPTAIN TYLOR

King slacker Tylor goofs his way to the top by leaving the work to less idle hands in an anti-authoritarian satire aimed squarely at lazy losers. Sci-fi comedy like *Star Trek* starring the *Simpsons*, as a dazed and confused good-for-nothing lucks into an adoring alien princess, his own battle cruiser, and enemies too stupid to kill him. Be assured his bosses hate him. Set phasers for "Fun" and just a little wistfulness. (Right Stuf)

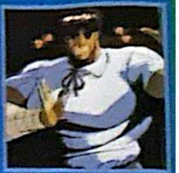


PARO-DAZED

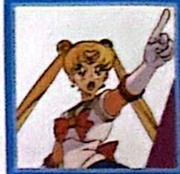
Anime That Makes Hideous, Merciless Fun of Other Anime



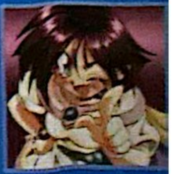
KENSHIRO, *Fist of the North Star*—Super-muscled and super-eyebrowed, martial artist supreme Kenshiro can make people's bodies explode with a single punch.



MARI, *Project A-ko*—Mari looks just like Kenshiro...except for her pigtails, schoolgirl outfit and high-pitched voice. She's one classmate you don't want to mess with!



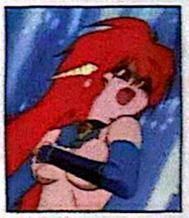
SAILOR MOON, *Sailor Moon*—The queen of all magical pretty girl anime bumbles through life, but always triumphs over evil when she transforms into Sailor Moon!



AMELIA, *Slayers*—Obsessed with right an wrong, little Amelia has habit of pointing her finge dramatically, and vowin to fight injustice just like certain Moon princess w know. ■ Tom Rock

10 DRAGON HALF

Tolkien spins furiously in his grave as a dragon-slayer falls in love with a dragon, and their sanity-challenged daughter gets a crush on a pop star. Super-deformed hijinks ensue, with time out for laxatives, the enmity of a blob princess and a cast who knows they're in a cartoon, and complain about their missing scenes. Fantasy comes piled with modern gags, and a closing theme that defies belief. (ADV)

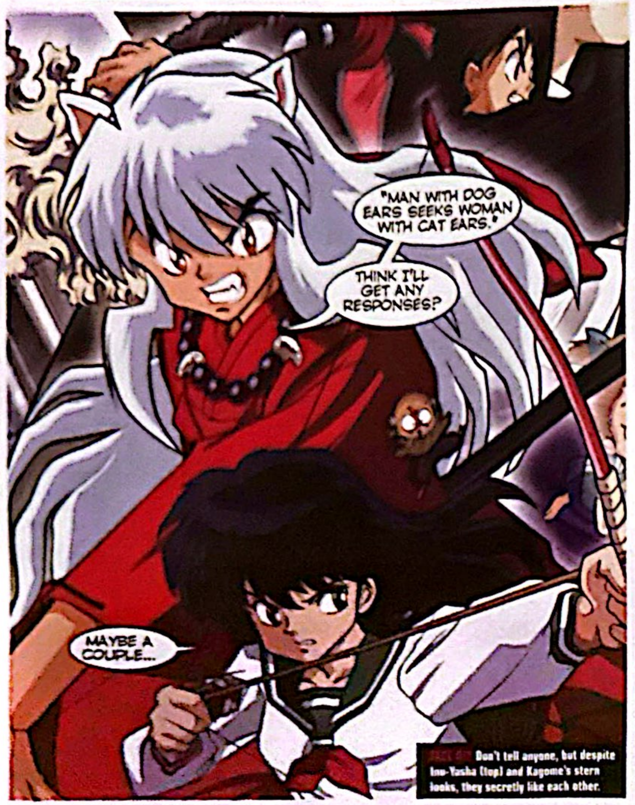


BEST OF ACTION

Feel That? It's Your Heart Pounding...

1 INU YASHA

Time-traveling schoolgirl Kagome ends up in feudal Japan with a bickering half-demon on a quest for a sacred jewel. Fast-paced action with a touch of romance and a good slap of comedy, this tale is also the truest to the art style of Rumiko Takahashi—see, there are some rewards for being anime's golden girl. *Inu Yasha* is arguably Takahashi at her peak, incorporating the best elements from her past work. (Viz)


"MAN WITH DOG EARS SEEKS WOMAN WITH CAT EARS."
THINK I'LL GET ANY RESPONSES?
MAYBE A COUPLE...

Don't tell anyone, but despite Inu-Yasha (top) and Kagome's stern looks, they secretly like each other.

2 YU YU HAKUSH

A.k.a. *Poltergeist Report* meets *Drag Ball Z*, as ghost of school's toug punk is recr by the Sp Realm to fi paranorm crime. With episodes and a new haunting every we this is an adventure series steeped in As myth and magic, with sorcerous con between the inhabitants of the hum spirit and demon worlds. (FUNimatio

3 RUROUNI KENSHIN

He's the orig Last Samura down on his lu after the fall the shogun, wi a past tha keeps trying t catch up wit him in the form of vengeful warriors. Throw in a love interest whose father ran a marti arts school, a boyish pickpocket and a guy with an unreasonably large sword and you've got a moody, mean anime that has picked up one of the biggest followings in fandom. (Media Blasters

4 DRAGON BALL Z

When the family business is destroying the Earth, it's gonna piss th relatives off if you forget to do it. Pow ful super-warrior Goku has to team u with his greatest enemy to rescue his son from his long-lost brother. And that's going to involve a lot of earth-shattering fights (literally), in the kick-ass anime that makes *Street Fighter* look like *Teletubbies*. (FUNimation)

5 TRIGUN

A gunslinger renowned far and wide as the Humanoid Typhoon joins together with two Insurance girls, shoots and sweet talks his way across a desert planet in anime's sci-fi answer to the Wild West. Enough collateral damage to rival *The Dirty Pair*, laughs aplenty and the kind of gunplay John Woo dreams about. Bounty hunting from the point of view of the hunted, with a hero who tries not to kill anyone! (Geneon)

6 LUPIN THE 3RD

Anime's very own crime caper, as international master thief Lupin steals anything he wants, including jewels, lost treasures and girls, lots and lots of girls. With a retro style courtesy of its 1960s origin, this old-school classic has a newfound trendiness, and a wisecracking, smooth-talking anarchist hero who can out-suave James Bond, outsmart the cops and charm his way out of any situation. Cohorts Jigen and Goemon, a sharpshooter and a samurai, round out his posse. A life of crime never looked like so much fun. (Geneon)

7 DRAGON BALL

It's an action-fantasy smackdown as monkey-boy Son Goku goes in search of the seven mythical balls that will grant any wish, in the first of a multi-story-arc fightfest that just won't give up. With battles that can last for up to three whole episodes, this is a truly endless quest, with plenty of humor along the way, as well as demons, ghosts and, most of all, girls. (FUNimation)

8 READ OR DIE

Surreal bespectacled heroism as a prim secret agent from the British Library uses her magical power over paper to fight evil bookworms intent on taking over the world. Giant grasshoppers may also be involved. It's a smart comedy that doesn't scrimp on the chaotic battle set pieces. Practical magic as a bunch of Japanese historical figures cause trouble—like *Lupin* with librarians. (Manga Entertainment)

IS THERE A *THIRD* OPTION? I HATE BOOKS.

9 NINJA SCROLL

For super-fast samurai action, you can't beat Yoshiaki Kawajiri's martial arts masterpiece, with slashing blades, nefarious ninja and just a dash of the supernatural. Not for the faint-hearted, this cranks the action up to eleven with gory swordfights drenched in blood and entrails. Look out, too, for numerous homages to the action films of yesteryear, and some of the Madhouse studio's best animation. (Manga Entertainment)

10 NADIA, SECRET OF BLUE WATER

A Victorian inventor teams up with the daughter of an Extraordinary Gentleman on the run from evil thieves in an action-adventure that was years ahead of its time. Where else will you find *Evangelion's* Hideaki Anno directing an original idea from Jules Verne, filtered through Hayao Miyazaki himself? Submarine adventure, treasure hunting and Atlantis, the Lost Empire—well before Disney "thought up" its movie. ADV)

SPEED-O BUSHIDO

The Code of the Samurai...Revealed

Way back in the 17th century, the samurai class ruled Japan with a fierce sword, but were themselves ruled by *bushido*, translated as "The Way of the Warrior." These men lived and died by the following rules:

- A samurai must be obedient to his lord, even if the lord orders him to kill himself.
- Any dishonor to the lord dishonors the samurai, and it must be avenged!
- A samurai should only unsheathe his sword in the service of his lord.
- Even though he must be ready to kill anyone at his lord's request, a samurai should be just, stoic and try to preserve all life.
- A samurai can disagree with his lord, but must obey him. The only alternative is to kill himself. Bummer. ■

FACTION ACTION

Fascinating Facts About the Hottest Adventure Hits

MAKIN' MOONIES—*Yu Yu Hakusho* creator Yogahiro Togashi and *Sailor Moon* manga-ka Naoko Takeuchi were wed in 1999, and had a son shortly thereafter. It's the *ultimate crossover!*

NO MONKEY LOVE—Creator of *Lupin the 3rd*, Monkey Punch, actually despises his pseudonym. Katoh Kazuhiko was given the name by his editor at the time with the condition that the name could be changed in a year. Unfortunately, *Lupin* became so popular that Monkey Punch stu

RATINGS BY NIEL-SAN: Rumiko Takahashi's fantasy action series *Inu-Yasha* may be gaining steam here in the States, but it's so popular in Japan that its weekly airings are watched by a full *15 percent* of the entire Japanese population!

HEAR IT AGAIN—In Japan, the *Ranma 1/2* voice actors for Ranma and Akane once again pair off as Inu-Yasha and Kikyo in *Inu-Yasha*. Those two were just meant to be together!

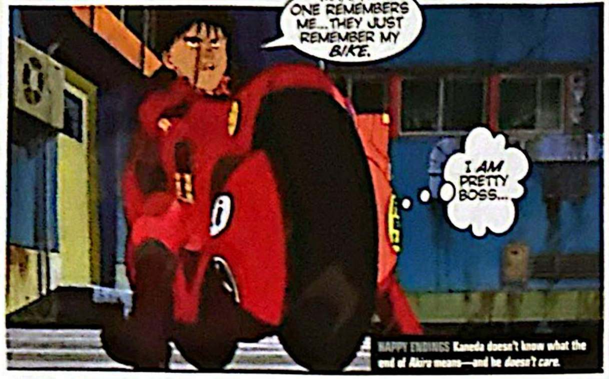
IT'S NOT PUNNY—Most of the names in *Yu Yu Hakusho* are puns in Japanese related to the occult and supernatural phenomenon. Yusuke means "ghost helper" and Kuwabara is a Japanese phrase used to ward off evil spirits. ■

BEST OF SCI-FI

Nobody Knows High-Tech like the Japanese

1 AKIRA

In one of anime's best-known work street kids clash with the army in a post-nuclear metropolis. The movie that wowed Generation X with its biker gangs, military conspiracy and full-on destruction. Akira ran so far over-budget that its producers were afraid they would never see the profits. But director Katsuhiro Otomo put all that money on screen in a movie that still looks fresh today, even if nobody really understands it. (Geneon)


MAN, NO ONE REMEMBERS ME...THEY JUST REMEMBER MY *BIKE*.
I AM PRETTY BOSS...

HAPPY ENDINGS Kaneda doesn't know what the end of *Akira* means—and he doesn't care.

2 COWBOY BEBOP

Bounty hunters cruise a funky solar system in Shinichiro Watanabe's homage to blaxploitation, kung fu movies and 1970s chic—years ahead of *Kill Bill*. Impoverished bounty hunters Spike and Jet track convicts in space, with a jazzy soundtrack, compelling storyline and scenes once considered too hot for Japanese TV. Includes the best anime soundtrack ever. (Bandai)

3 GHOST IN THE SHELL: S.A.C.

A crack team of operatives battle cyber-crime in the future, led by the pretty deadly Motoko Kusanagi. With a variety of episodes, this is real anime for the 21st century—heavy on CG, made with the foreign market in mind, and ready to use shock tactics to show us how our world could look the day after tomorrow. (Bandai)

4 MARTIAN SUCCESSOR NADESICO

A chef beco a giant ro pilot in a s mecha sa that puts a g girl in cha of a battle and launches an all-out w against a mysterious foe. Humor is t order of the day, as the crew all beco anime fans, host idol singer contes on board the ship, and uncover th shocking secret behind their advanc and treacherous invaders! (ADV)

5 GHOST IN THE SHELL

Quintessential anime cyberpunk in which rival government agencies fight over jurisdiction in a world without geographical borders. High-maintenance cyborg Motoko is stalked by an artificial intelligence who wants to be human in a future cityscape beautifully realized by arthouse anime maverick Mamoru Oshii from the manga by Masamune Shirow. Philosophical twists and kung-fu gunplay to rival *The Matrix*, which was itself inspired by this superb anime movie. (Manga Entertainment)

THE STAR BLAZER

The Best of Sci-Fi Pioneer Leiji Matsumoto

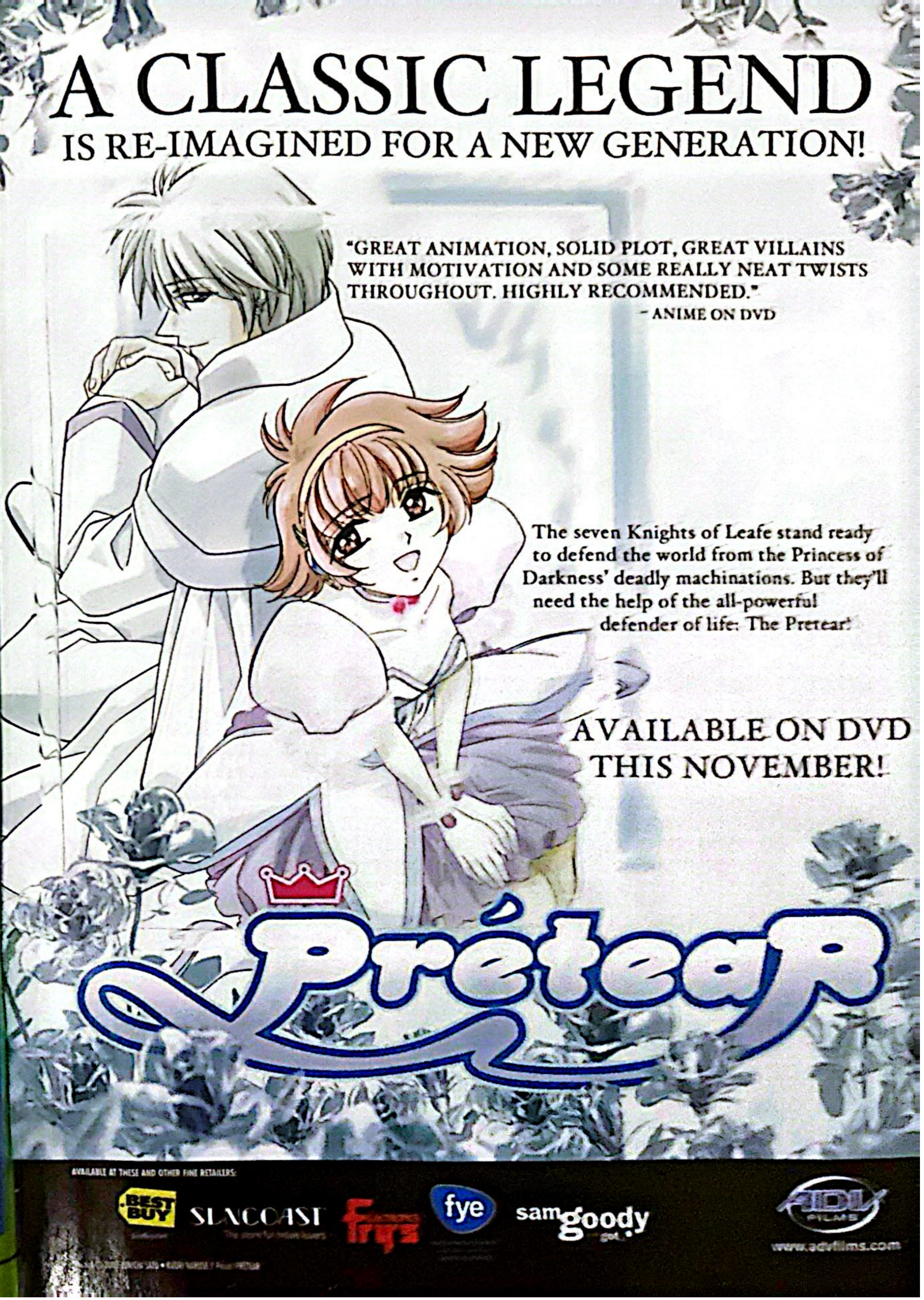
Leiji Matsumoto devoted his career to producing some of the best sci-fi anime ever, in his own distinct universe. His characters and stories have inspired multiple generations of anime fans—here's his best.

[illegible] (Voyager)—a.k.a. Space Cruiser Yamato. A true space adventure. Yamato is easily one of the most recognized anime ever. Multiple series and movies have been created since 1970, and a new series is in the works.

[illegible]—Tetsuro is searching for a new life, and the series of stories that chronicle his adventures still captivate audiences. Spawning countless series and movies, Galaxy Express has managed to tie all of Matsumoto's works together.

[illegible] (Geneon)—Harlock is the definitive Space Pirate, and one of the most beloved characters ever. He's had adventures in countless series and movies since his debut in 1978. ■ [illegible]

LEIJI MATSUMOTO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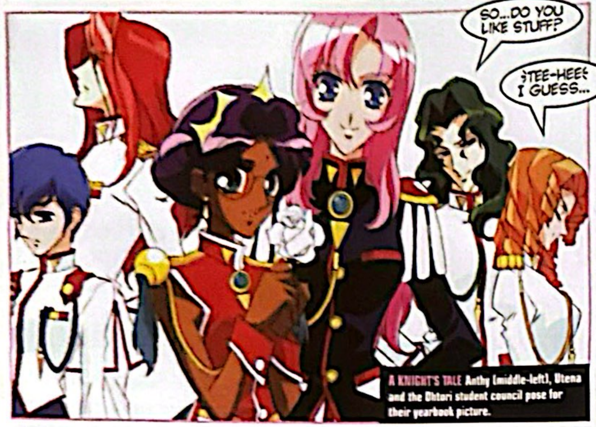
BEST OF GIRL POWER

Only With High Heels Can Asses Be Truly Kicked

1 REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA

We don't just mean "magical girls," we mean the armies of strong, positive female role models that abound in anime, like the sword-fighting, girl-chasing, revolution-inspiring Utena. Attending a school for fencers in a fantasy world where fairy tales come true, pink-haired Utena is the toughest blade and the better of all the boys, in an anime that leans heavily on the classic tomboy saga, *Rose of Versailles*. (Central Park Media)



SO...DO YOU LIKE STUFF?
TEE-HEE! I GUESS...

A KNIGHT'S TALE Anthy (middle-left), Utena and the Ohtori student council pose for their yearbook picture.

2 PRINCESS NINE

Tomboy baseballer Ryo demands that the girls get a league of their own, as the ladies of a Japanese high school fight corporate intrigue in the world of amateur sports with time out to fight over the token boy. A home run for the under-represented sports genre. (ADV)

3 SAILOR MOON

So good we listed it twice, Naoko Takeuchi's team-show is the ultimate in girl power. Heroine Serena has all the hang-ups of a teenage girl—she thinks nobody will ever love her; she knows that she's a ditz and a klutz. But she's got friends who believe in her and that's gotta count for something, especially if they've got magic powers. (ADV and Geneon)

4 FRUITS BASKET

Plucky orphan girl Tohru agrees to swap household chores for bed and board with a family who transforms into the creatures of the Chinese zodiac whenever they embrace a member of the opposite sex. Irresistibly charming, with a female lead who refuses to be a doormat. It may seem a *Ranma* clone for the 21st century, but it's funny and sweet enough to stand out on it's own. The English dub is also its own work of art. (FUNimation)

BISHONEN 10

Are You an Anime Pretty Bo

Shôjo anime is full of bishonen—stunningly beautiful men who tend to torment the heroine in one way or another. If you think you've got the goods, take our quiz to find out for sure!

FUSHIGI YUGI

- Do your teeth sparkle every time you sm
- Do cherry blossoms swirl around you every you look up?
- Do you have long, sleek hair that you obse comb?
- Is your past full of loneliness and despair, be and heartache?
- Are you a villain that yearns to be good, bu just very misunderstood?
- Do your female friends accuse you of secr being in love with your male best friend?
- Do you look sexy in feminine clothing?

If you answered yes to more than five of the questions, congratulations! You're definitely bishonen! Now be careful—most of 'em die tra deaths in the arms of the heroine. ■ BD

5 CARD CAPTOR SAKURA

A sugary sweet schoolgirl teams up with the cutesified version of the Hound of Hell to retrieve magical tarot cards lost from a book of spells in all-girl powerhouse CLAMP's answer to the *Pokémon* collecting mania. Aimed at 10-year-old girls, but it has a large number of older fans, too, who can't resist the bright, summery antidote to all those doom and gloom anime. Undeniably cute and still action-packed. (Geneon)

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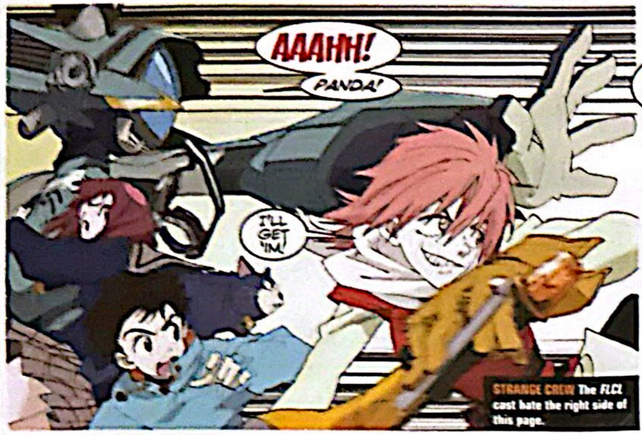
*Artwork subject to change.

BEST OF THE WEIRD

Blowing Your Mind, One Cell at a Time...

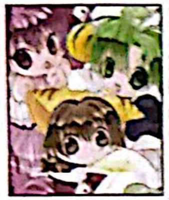
1 FLCL

Some anime are just too weird for words, but that's why we love 'em. And they don't come much weirder than *FLCL*, where a boy with no brain pulls robots out of his skull, is hit on by his older brother's girlfriend and gets whacked upside the head by a Vespa-riding alien who uses a Rickenbacker guitar as her weapon of choice. A garish color scheme and stretched, attenuated character designs give Gainax's random punk comedy anime a totally original look. Possibly the coolest anime ever made. (Synch-Point)


AAAHH!
PANDA!
I'LL GET 'IM!

STRANGE CREW The *FLCL* cast hate the right side of this page.

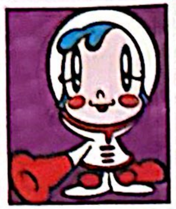
2 DI GI CHARAT



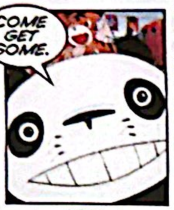
A cartoon mascot for the real-life Gamers store in Akihabara, Japan, Dejiko, a.k.a. Di Gi Charat, is an alien princess turned shop assistant on a mission—to become a pop star. Beyond cute, Dejiko, her pal Puchiko and her rival Rabi-en-Rose treat each other mercilessly while dealing with annoying customers, getting possessed by snails and dealing with alien gangs...on their normal days. (Synch-Point)

3 SUPER MILK-CHAN

A self-centered brat obsessed with sushi wouldn't be your first choice as a secret agent, especially if her best friend is a talking nostril hair, but that's *Super Milk-chan* for you. Seemingly plotted by throwing darts at a board, they said it wouldn't survive the upgrade from 5 to 30 minutes per episode. They were horribly wrong. (ADV)

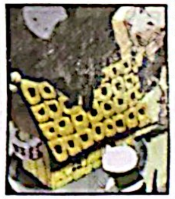


4 PANDA GO PANDA


COME GET SOME.

Proof that Studio Ghibli is no stranger to mind-altering substances, cute girl Mimi plays house with a giant panda and his clingy cub. An infectious theme song, and Mimiko's bizarre panty exhibitionism adds to the mix, in a 30-year-old kiddie cartoon from the people who later bring you *My Neighbor Totoro*. (Geneon)

5 CAT SOUP

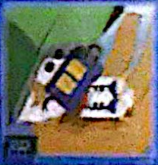


Watery elephants, pigs that eat themselves, samurai sushi and a dark, disturbing tale of a boy-cat in search of his sister's kidnapped soul. But when they find it, it's not enough, and they have to find an orange flower... because...that's what they have to find...*man*...did we just see a wizard slice up a woman in front of an audience...? (Central Park Media)

IRREVERENT REFERENCES

The Weird Stuff You've Never Noticed...

Anime creators are frequently anime fans, just like you. When given the opportunity, these creative geniuses frequently slip in hidden references to their favorites!



- In *FLCL* episode 2, Haruko slams her precious Vespa into a wall. Her repair job is a little unorthodox, though: she crams a Gundam-esque model into the engine!
- *Love Hina*'s samurai Motoko has been watching a lot of *Lupin the 3rd*. In episode 6, while cutting blocks, she cribs samurai Goemon's trademark line "I have cut a worthless object."
- In the first episode of *Martian Successor Nadesico*, computer expert Ruri assumes the infamous crossed-hands-over-the-mouth pose made famous by *Evangelion*'s Gendo! ■ ZB

MECHWARRIOR
THE BATTLETECH COLLECTABLE MINIATURES GAME
COUNTERASSAULT
WHO STARTED IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYMORE
WHAT'S 'MECH VS. 'MECH IN FULL-ON MELEE COMBAT. COLLECT ALL 124 NEW FIGURES
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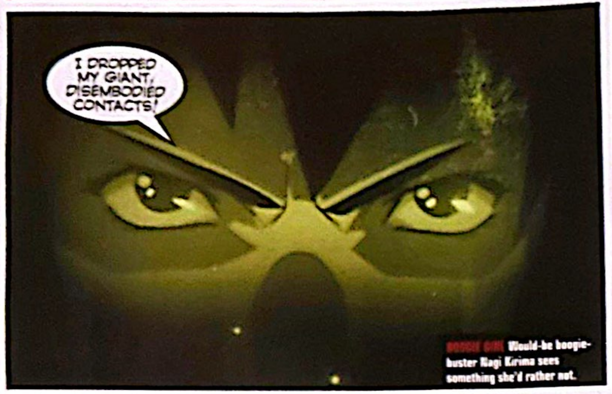
BEST OF HORROR

Ghosts, Vampires and...More Vampires! Oh, My!

1 BOOGIEPOP PHANTOM

Does death truly walk among them? There are strange goings-on in a Japanese town where students have disappeared and a whole school still reels from the after-effects of several murders five years earlier. And who is Boogiepop, the strange entity that walks the night? Creepiness abounds in a horror series based on Kohei Kadono's chiller novels. Demonic possession in contemporary Tokyo with evil creatures that slide between dimensions. **(Right Stuf)**


I DROPPED MY GIANT, DISEMBODIED CONTACTS!

[illegible] Would-be boogie-buster Nagi Kirima sees something she'd rather not.

2 BLOOD: THE LAST VAMPIRE

Strangers meet on a train, but only one will get off alive. Saya isn't like other schoolgirls—she's an ancient vampire, hunting demonic invaders for a secret government organization. Hiroyuki Kitakubo's short, sharp shocker features stunning CG animation sometimes indistinguishable from reality—and that only serves to make the blood-spattered finale all the more disturbing. **(Manga Entertainment)**

3 PETSHOP OF HORRORS

It's a group of contemporary morality plays, as a menacing Chinatown pet shop owner gives sinners their hearts' desires no matter what the consequences. The Faustian Count D metes out peculiarly rough justice to a succession of wrongdoers, while his unlikely cop counterpart tries to work out whose side he's really on. Blood-chilling solutions to a series of modern malaises—and the best argument for always reading the label since *Gremlins*. **(Urban Vision)**

4 HELLSING

Blood-drenched sunsets, remarkable night scenes (difficult for anime to pull off), werewolves in London, and government special-ops in a chiller that mates *Resident Evil* to *Buffy*. Vampire Arucard is the ultimate bad boy who sucks on his pretty assistant's blood to save her from a bullet in her heart. Now she's tied to him forever, as he hunts down his fellow undead—but whose side is he *really* on? **(Geneon)**

5 VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU

Winner of anime's most self-explanatory title award, this anime displays the creepy side of Japan's old capital Kyoto with its leafy lanes, languid pace, and demonic possessors lurking in the shadows. The last vampire exorcist fights off *the icky* and demonic Shinma invaders, gaining a plucky schoolgirl and a glacial ice maiden as sidekicks for the longer-running TV serial. Be thankful she's on *our* side—crucifixes and garlic don't work on this Japanese blood-sucker. **(AnimEigo & TOKYOPOP)**

MONSTER MASH A Quickie Guide to Japanese Demons

ONI Large and brutish creatures, often seen with horns and blue skin. They are frequently clothed in tiger stripped furs and carry large clubs.

SNOW WOMAN Another mountain spirit, she's seen as a beautiful maiden with dark sad eyes. Frequently, tales of lovers trapped on a mountain end with a tragic encounter with this snow spirit.

KAPPA Kappa are water demons with a dish for a head, a shell and flippers. They are often green in color and live near rivers and lakes. They attempt to lure unsuspecting travelers to their doom. ■

THE BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL IS ABOUT TO REACH EPIC PROPORTIONS!

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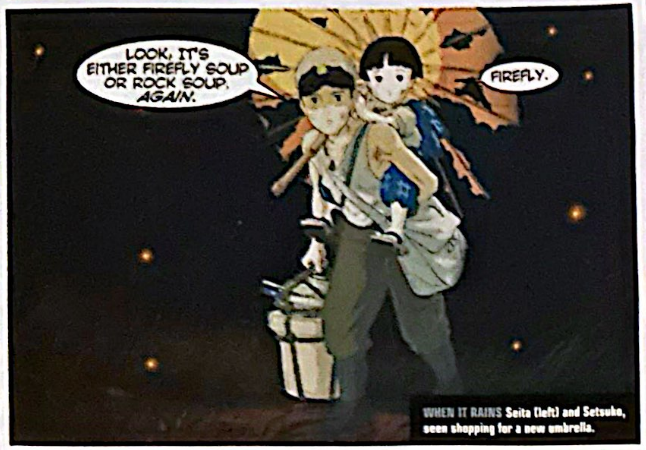
BEST OF DRAMA

Angst, Love and Loss—We'll Bring the Tissues

1 GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES

A heart-rending war story from Studio Ghibli's Isao Takahata, as two orphaned children starve to death in the fiery ruins of Kobe. There are many anime about children in WWII, but this was one of the first and definitely the best. Thanks to the familiar anime style, and the slow, inevitable decline of the characters, it's all the more horrific because you can see the same thing could so easily happen to you. (Central Park Media)


LOOK, IT'S EITHER FIREFLY SOUP OR ROCK SOUP, AGAIN.
FIREFLY.

WHEN IT RAINS Seita (left) and Setsuko, seen shopping for a new umbrella.

HALO KITTY

Now You Can Join the Haibane!

Halos are all the rage—just ask cool cats like *Haibane Renmei*'s Rakka. Here's how you can join this fashion elite—like our super-intern Miguel A.E. Betita—with none of the death!

I DON'T GET PAID.

1. Get some pipe cleaners—preferably white, yellow or gold.
2. Wrap them around a soccer ball to make a round shape. *Tie them together if you need to make them longer.*
3. Remove the pipe cleaner ring from the ball, wrap more pipe cleaners around the ring until it's thick enough. Don't make it too heavy!
4. Glue the halo to one end of a popsicle stick, tape or glue the other end of the stick to a headband.
5. Put it on and enjoy the attention.

2 PERFECT BLUE

An idol singer tries to pursue an acting career, only to come apart at the seams as she is stalked by an obsessed fan...or maybe that should be *two* obsessed fans...in Satoshi Kon's senses-shattering slasher flick. Flashbacks and dream sequences catch the viewer unaware, creating a mind-bending succession of twists, blind alleys and red herrings. By the end, you're as disturbed as the people you're watching, and that's an impressive achievement. (Manga Entertainment)

3 JIN-ROH

In an alternate Cold War Japan torn apart by riots, a military policeman falls for one of the terrorist bombers who oppose the government. It's *Little Red Riding Hood* told from the wolf's point of view, as a man sacrifices everything for the girl he desires, while armored lawmen fight rebels with big guns. Think of it as the art-house *Akira*—slower, smarter and with an East European look, but no less skillfully animated and stylish. (Bandai)

4 MILLENNIUM ACTRESS

A frail, aging actress tells her life story for a documentary, revealing a love story that leaps across time. Deliberately confusing real history with scenes from her movies in the style of his earlier *Perfect Blue*, director Satoshi Kon creates a love story with cinema itself, and with humans throughout history who find romance and mystery. A glimpse into an actor's self-regard, or a haunting tale of a woman losing her marbles? (DreamWorks)

5 HAIBANE RENMEI

Flightless angels are second-class citizens living in a ghetto close to a population of humans, in a timeless land where nobody can remember the past. A lyrical, gentle anime with the refined, fragile artwork of *Serial Experiments Lain*'s yoshitoshi ABe, *Haibane Renmei* unites fragile, tea-sipping ingenues with a mission to find out what on earth's going on. There's a long wait, but sit back and admire the view. (Geneon)

'TIS THE SEASON FOR JPOP!

NEW

T.M.Revolution Sonic Warp
T.M.R's latest DVD release, now available in the US (Region 1 encoding). Features full-length music videos as well as the special feature HEART OF SWORD, performed live at Otakon 2003! TOF-004

Various Artists Jpop CD
Your favorite Anime theme songs, the biggest Jpop hits, now available for the first time on one disc!
Featuring songs from Rurouni Kenshin (Samurai X), Astroboy, Piroppo, One Piece, Mobilesuit Gundam Seed and Gravitation **Music by** Siam Shade, Zone, Tommy february⁶, Judy And Mary, Suiteisho-jo, T.M.Revolution, Nami Tamaki, Yosuke Sakanoue, Mika Nakashima, Ken Hirai, the brilliant green, YeLLOW Generation, Chemistry, SOULHEAD and hyde TOF-001

T.M.Revolution coordinate
Twelve tracks including the bonus track HEART OF SWORD from Rurouni Kenshin (Samurai X) and INVOKE, the theme from Mobilesuit Gundam Seed. Each CD comes with a special T.M.R sticker and phonetic Roma-ji Lyrics in the booklet. TOF-002

T.M.Revolution Summer Crush
2-Disc DVD with concert footage featuring all of T.M.R's hit songs spanning his career and special T.M.R behind the scenes footage. Phonetic Roma-ji lyrics included in the liner notes. TOF-003

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BEST OF FANTASY

Even in the Orient, Swords and Sorcery Rule!

1 RECORD OF LODOSS WAR

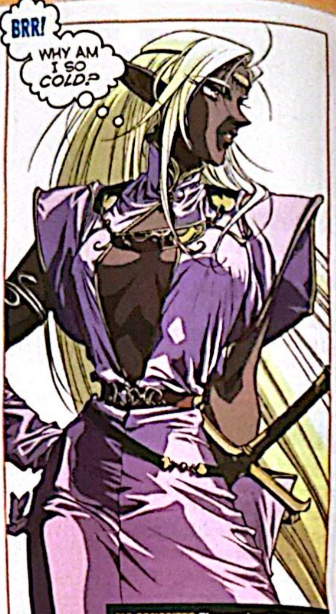
Dungeons and dragons combine in a sword-and-sorcery anime that was based on a dice-and-paper RPG and comes steeped in a gamer's love of fighters and magic-users, clerics and thieves. Elves both good and bad, and an old-fashioned fight between good and evil with time out for treasure hunting in a peculiarly European-looking fantasy world, courtesy of Celtic art fanatics and creators Nobuteru Yuki and Yutaka Izubuchi. (Central Park Media)

2 BERSERK

Tough, gritty anime fantasy with a touch of tragedy, as a mercenary hell-bent on revenge pursues the cabal of inter-dimensional devils who have caused him so much grief in the past. Real blood and real Guts, as our battle-mad hero wades knee-deep in the dead wielding a giant sword—no pretty elves and pixies here; this is gritty, unglamorous slaughter for those who take their fantasy seriously. (Media Blasters)

3 SLAYERS

And for those who *don't* take their fantasy seriously, there's always *Slayers*, where spells have to be engaged in conversation before they work, nobody ever has enough to eat, and your chick in chain mail has got a complex about the size of her chest. The world still needs to be saved, but the quest is in the hands of a gang of bickering morons. And they're much more worried about divvying the loot than saving the world. (ADV & Central Park Media)


BRR!
WHY AM I SO COLD?

ELF-CONCEITED The semi-evil dark elf Aratess throws a mean 20-sided die.

BEST OF THE BEST

There's plenty more genres out there in anime that we didn't have room for. But we didn't want to forget 'em—especially those particular genres the Japanese seem to love. Read on and see which are your cups of tea!

PLEASE, SIR, NOT ANOTHER 'MAID IN JAPAN' JOKE.

MAHOROMATIC

A GUY SURROUNDED BY HOT GIRLS

1. Love Hina (Bandai)
2. Tenchi Muyo! (Geneon)
3. Mahoromatic (Geneon)

ROBOTS-TURNED-MAIDS

1. Steel Angel Kurumi (ADV)
2. Mahoromatic (Geneon)
3. Hand Maid May (Geneon)

PURE SAMURAI

1. Rurouni Kenshin (Media Blasters/ADV)
2. Tsukikage Ran (Bandai)
3. Samurai Deeper Kyo (Media Blasters)

TRANSFORMING CHICKS

1. Sailor Moon (ADV & Geneon)
2. Saint Tail (TOKYOPOP)
3. Pretty Sammy (Geneon)

AFTER THE APOCALYPSE

1. Akira (Geneon)
2. s-CRY-ed (Bandai)
3. Fist of the North Star (Manga Entertainment)

POLICE STORIES

1. Patlabor (Central Park Media)
2. Heat Guy J (Geneon)
3. You're Under Arrest (ADV & AnimEigo)

VIDEO GAMES ALIVE!

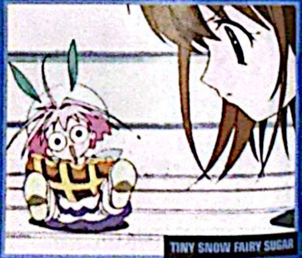
1. Sakura Taisen (ADV, Geneon & FUNimation)
2. Street Fighter V (Manga Entertainment)
3. Samurai Showdown (ADV)

MIND-CRUSHINGLY CUTE

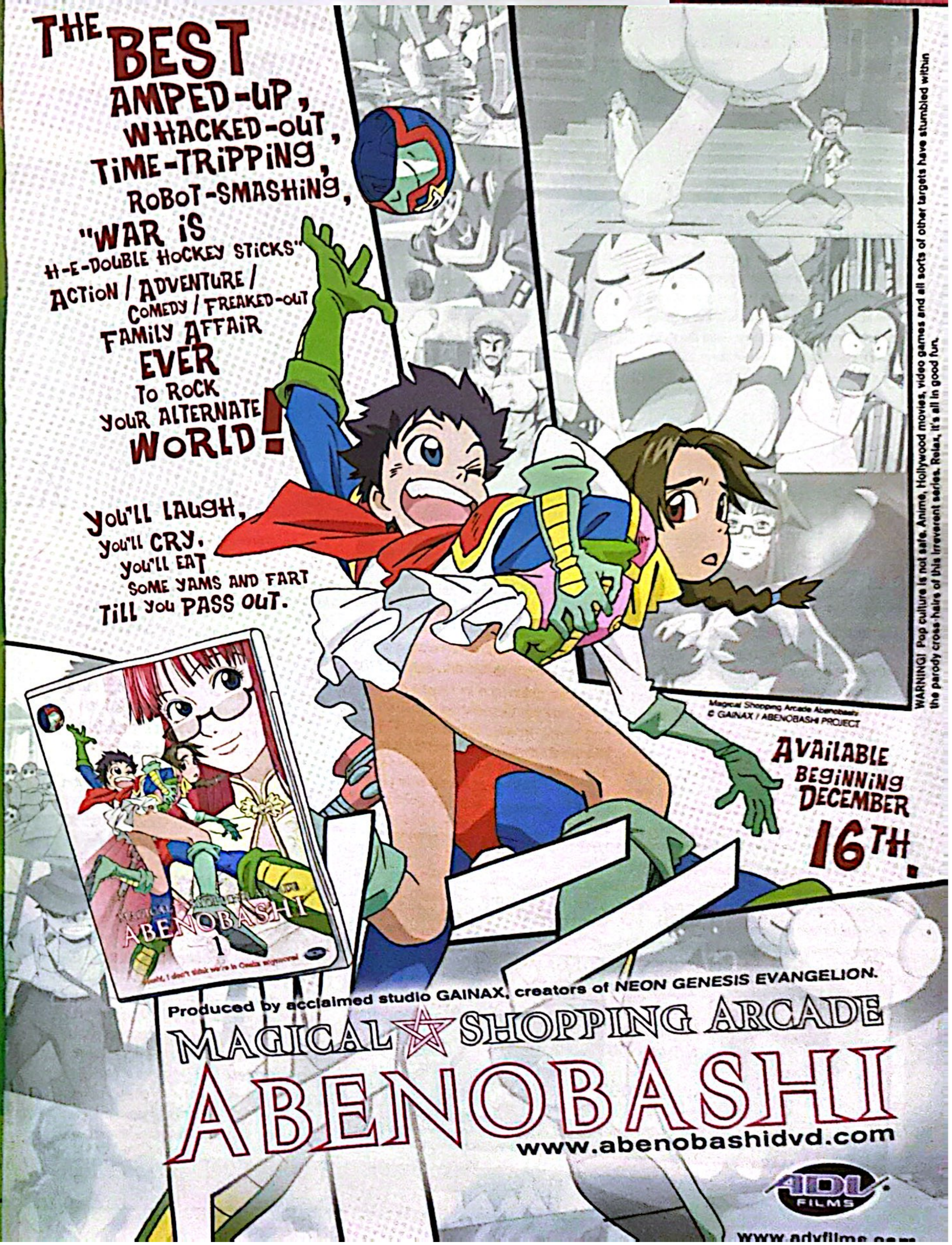
1. My Neighbor Totoro (Fox)
2. Di Gi Charat (Synch-Point)
3. Tiny Snow Fairy Sugar (Geneon)

SPORTS

1. Princess Nine (ADV)
2. Initial D (TOKYOPOP)
3. Battle Athletes Victory (Geneon)



TINY SNOW FAIRY SUGAR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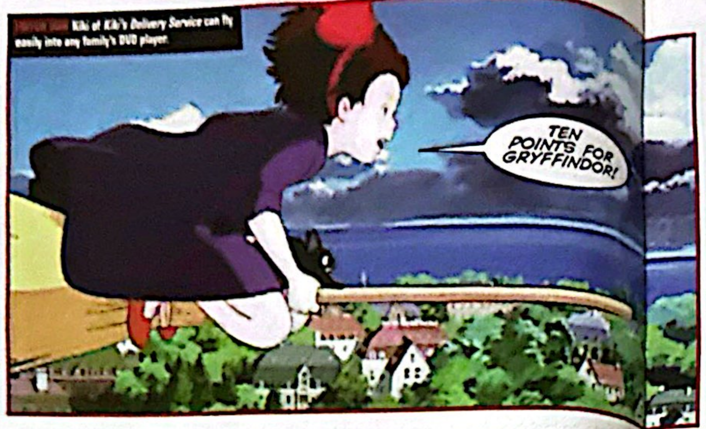
WARNING! Pop culture is not safe. Anime, Hollywood movies, video games and all sorts of other targets have stumbled within the parody cross-hairs of this irreverent series. Relax, it's all in good fun.

CAN WE HELP YOU?

Having Trouble Convincing Others About Anime? We've Got Your Bac

Here at *Anime Insider*, we get tons and tons of mail from readers who need our help. Being an anime fan can be a hard road, and innocent *otaku* are often assailed by questions from non-believers who don't understand our perfectly natural obsession with Japanese animation. For a guide to these common questions—and the exact words you need to answer them with flying colors—just keep reading!


TEN POINTS FOR GRYFFINDOR!
Kiki of Kiki's Delivery Service can fly easily into any family's DVD player.

My friends say I'm too old to watch cartoons. How can I defend what I watch?

Nita Davenport, Olympia, WA

The idea that "cartoons are for kids" is an outdated perspective, and not just when it comes to anime. Lots of American cartoons are aimed at adults these days. But here's a good defense for anime:

"Japanese animation is produced for viewers of all ages. There's a lot of complex subtext in titles like Neon Genesis Evangelion *that younger viewers would never understand. Besides, one of the best places to find anime is in Cartoon Network's Adult Swim block, which is on after midnight anyways!"*

Any of the shows there, like Inu-Yasha, Trigun *or* Cowboy Bebop *should help prove your point.*

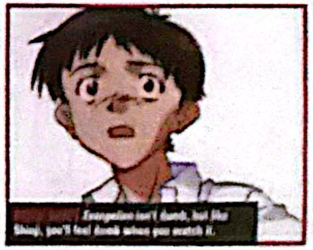
My mom says anime is demeaning to women! Is it really?

Marc Daubar, Cedar Rapids, IA

It's impossible to make that sort of blanket statement about an art form as wide-ranging as anime. Certainly there is anime where women aren't viewed in the most attractive light, so you've got to make clear that isn't what you're watching.

"There are lots of positive female role models in anime. In Sailor Moon, *all the girls kick butt while always trying to do the right thing! And some of the best examples are in Hayao Miyazaki films like* Kiki's Delivery Service *and* Spirited Away, *in which girls save the day thanks to their brains and determination. In fact,* Spirited Away *was so good, it won an Academy Award this year!"*

If these won't do it, try Fruits Basket. *The heroine, Tohru, is someone girls and boys can look up to.*


Evangelion isn't dumb, but like Shinji, you'll feel dumb when you watch it.

Not all anime characters play well with others—especially not in Street Fighter.

My dad calls anime "violent porn" and doesn't want me watching it. How can I convince him otherwise?

Denise Key, Waterville, ME

Just as above, that's a blanket statement that certainly doesn't apply in most situations. While some anime is definitely sick stuff, it's in the minority.

"Anime is on lots of TV networks that would never stand for objectionable material, because they couldn't sell advertising if they aired it! Also, most of the videos from U.S. anime distributors carry a content rating so there are no surprises. What's more, one of the companies importing anime for mainstream movie theaters is Disney—a studio not about to risk its reputation with icky stuff!"

Disney brings over Ghibli films, so show him any of 'em: Spirited Away, Castle in the Sky *or the least-violent film ever made,* My Neighbor Totoro.

What can I show my friends to get them to like anime?

Steve Crockett, Atlanta, GA

Figure out what your friends are into, and chances are there's an anime movie or series that's perfect for them! If your friends are into sports, go for Battle Athletes, Princess Nine *or* One-Pound Gospel. *If they're into romance,* Love Hina, His and Her Circumstances *or* Maison Ikkoku *are good bets. (Plus, you might want to see the sidebar, bottom.)*

In short, just tell them, "Whatever your interests, I can find your perfect anime match!" Then do it.

My parents say I'm too young to watch Adult Swim! What do I do?

Heather Gusek,
Bloomington, IN

Hmm. Well, if you're 36 years old, perhaps the best option is to move out of your parents' house in a huff. However, if you're 6 years old, the best thing to do is listen to mom and dad.

Seriously, this is one of those things where every individual is different. A mature 13-year-old might handle Adult Swim just fine, while some of us in the Anime Insider *office still aren't mature enough. But, we can at least provide you with a decent argument to use.*

"Even though Adult Swim is intended for grown-ups, Cartoon Network still edits out the most objectionable stuff. And some of the shows Cartoon Network puts in the Adult block used to be on network television in prime time! Like at 7 p.m. even!" You can even ask you parents to watch Adult Swim one night by themselves, to see if they think it's okay for you. Hey—they owe you a chance, right?

If that line of reasoning doesn't work, show your parents just how mature you are by stomping around the room, throwing yourself to the ground and crying your eyes out.

My best friend says anime is dumb. How do I make him see the light?

Kristen Bair, Canon City, CO

Here are some suggestions:

a) Reply, "I know you are, but what is anime?"

b) Find a new best friend.

c) Punch your best friend in the throat.

d) Agree with your best friend, and live a long, unhappy, anime-free life.

e) Tell your best friend's mom how the family car really got that dent in the fender.

f) Pick your favorite anime title, and ask your best friend to give it a chance and watch it with you.

We still really like "c." ■ Tom Root

STRIKE A MATCH

Convert Your Friends Into Anime Lovers! We'll Help!

One of the easiest ways to get your friends to join in the anime fun is to hook 'em with an American hit they already drool over. Use this handy-dandy guide to keep bringin' on the hits!

LODOSS WAR'S PARN
LORD OF THE RINGS' ARAGORN

IF THEY LOVE *LORD OF THE RINGS*...

...Then you've gotta dig *Record of Lodoss War.* Both have their own rich fantasy worlds, with monsters, exotic races, magic, and yes, dungeons and dragons. And each has a motley team of adventurers trying to achieve a hopeless quest against absolute evil!

IF THEY SAVOR *STAR WARS*...

...Then you'll go ga-ga for *Tenchi Muyo!* Like Luke Skywalker, Tenchi is destined for greatness, though he has no idea at first. *Tenchi's* Washu and Ryoko fill the Obi-Wan and Han Solo roles, and there are plenty of space princesses, too! Heck, there's even a corrupt Emperor. Just one difference, though ...unlike Luke, Tenchi doesn't have the hots for his sister.

IF YOU'RE WILD ABOUT *HARRY POTTER*...

...Then *Kiki's Delivery Service* is for you! Both Harry and Kiki follow the adventures of novice magic-users, each of whom must learn how to stand on their own two feet while mastering powers the rest of us can only dream of! And both are great for all ages.

IF *THE MATRIX* MAKES THEM MERRY...

...Then log into *.hack//SIGN.* Each follows a hero trapped in a digital world, trying to pierce the mysteries therein. For Neo, it's the Matrix; but *.hack//SIGN's* Tsukasa can't remember a time before he entered the online RPG "The World"... and can't log off. *.hack* may skimp on the guns, but none of the intrigue! ■ TP

Romance of the Three Kingdoms

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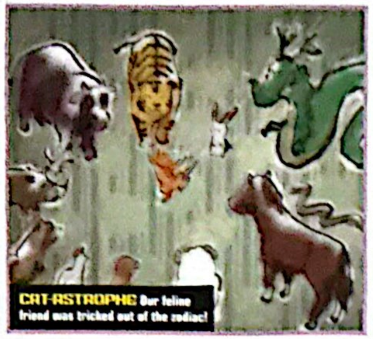
THE 'ANIME INSIDER' PREVIEW OF

Fruits Basket

TOKYOPOP's Zoo Crew Manga Serves up a 'Basket'full of Shôjo—But You Can Discover the Sohma Secret in This Exclusive Preview


CAT-ASTROPHE Our feline friend was tricked out of the zodiac!

A-tisket, a-tasket...a brand-new manga *Basket*! Come Feb. 10, fans can finally get their hands on the first *Fruits Basket* graphic novel!

Created by Natsuki Takaya, *Fruits Basket* is the story of an orphaned girl named Tohru, who is taken in by her classmate Yuki Sohma and his older cousin Shigure. She quickly learns that life at the Sohma house is anything but normal—her new landlords transform into animals from the Chinese zodiac when hugged by a member of the opposite sex!

"*Fruits Basket* is hard to categorize," says TOKYOPOP Editor Jake Forbes. "It's kind of like a classic Disney Hayley Mills film, in which a sweet, humble, innocent girl changes the lives of those around her."

As you're about to discover in our exclusive 12-page preview, no single genre can contain this story. "There's romance, comedy and drama, but it's a different feel from your typical shôjo series," says Forbes. "I think that's why fans have responded to it so strongly and why it's become so popular with male and female readers of all ages."

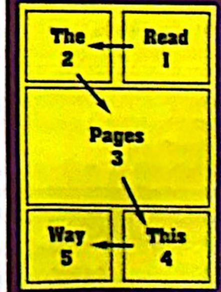
So, just how popular is it? "The response has been incredible," beams the editor. "When TOKYOPOP conducted a poll about which titles fans wanted to see translated, *Fruits Basket* ranked number one, with three times as many votes as the runner-up."

Each *Fruits Basket* graphic novel will be 200 pages long and released bimonthly with what Forbes says is TOKYOPOP's most authentic translation yet. "There is so much that's inherently Japanese about this series, we're looking for new ways to preserve authenticity while making it accessible," he says. "We will be retaining Japanese name honorifics (all of the '-sans' and '-chans') and footnoting cultural terms." And like all TOKYOPOP manga, the pages read right-to-left, just like in Japan.

It all adds up to a *Basket*-ful of goodness. "It's going to be a very fruity February," Forbes concludes.

■ Tom Root

IN THESE PAGES...

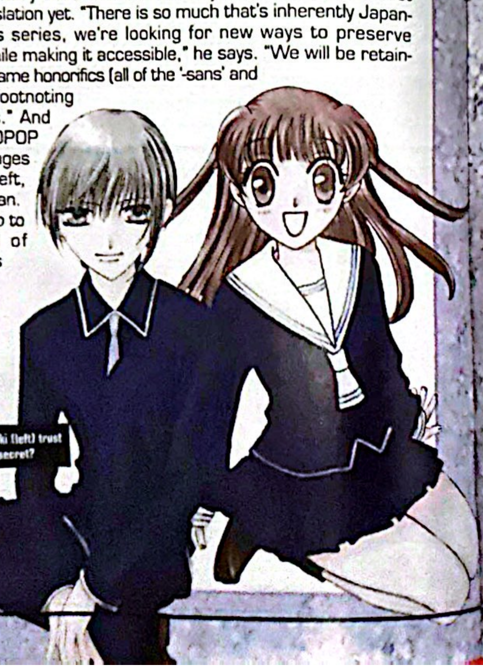


Before you get into the preview, you need to know that young Tohru has found herself living with Yuki Sohma, the dreamiest boy in her high school.

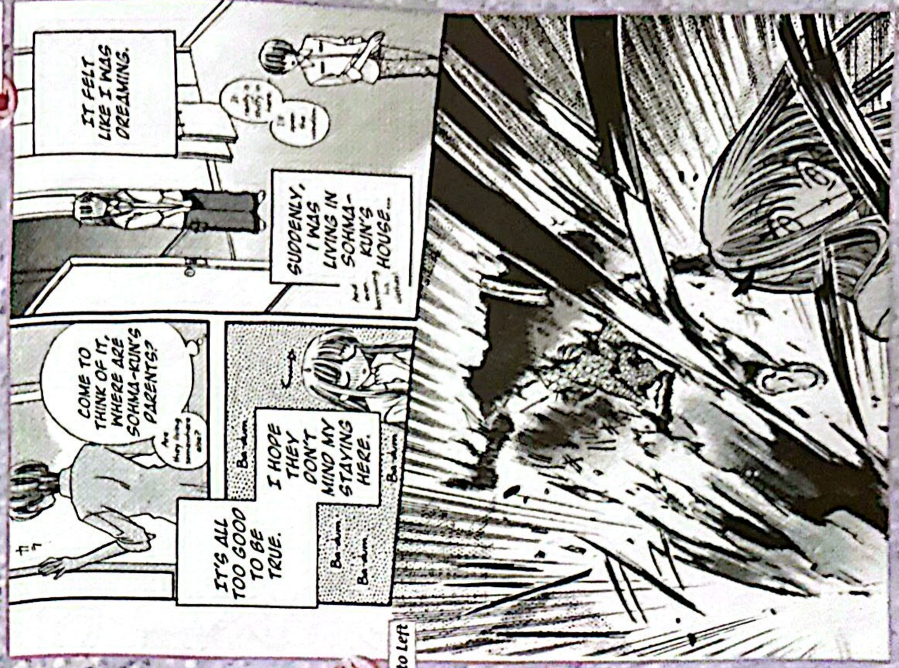
"At the start of the manga, orphaned Tohru lives in a tent on the Sohma's property," Forbes explains. "But Shigure and Yuki offer her room and board in exchange for doing the cooking and cleaning."

As a newcomer in the Sohma house, Tohru is about to be introduced to Yuri's rival, Kyo, another member of the Sohma family. More than that, she's going to learn about the Sohma family secret, which will change her life forever! You'll also get a look into creator Natsuki Takaya's head through her author's notes on the manga and her life.

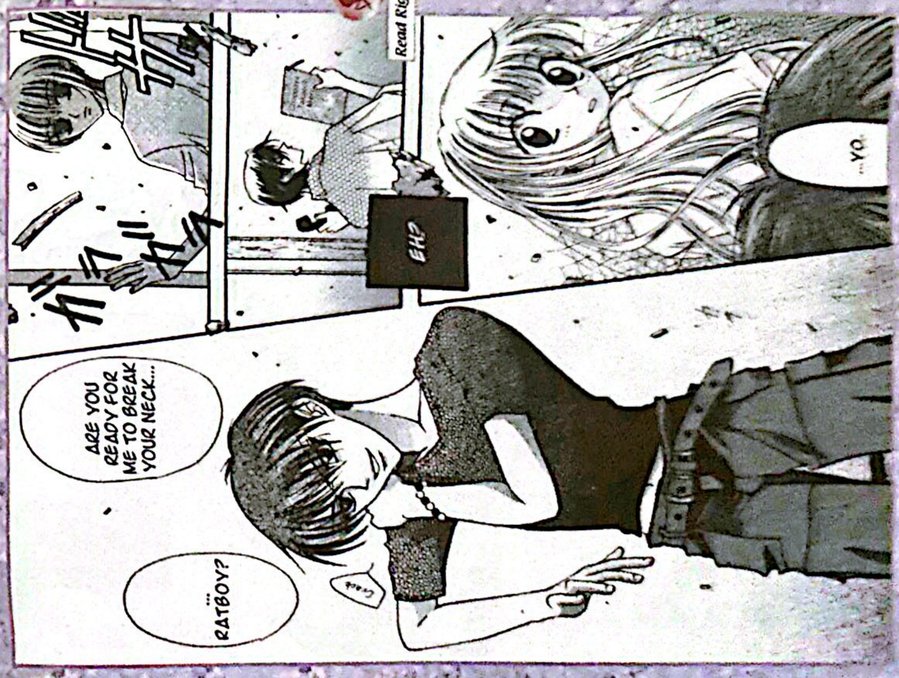
Now turn this magazine sideways and get in the Basket. ■ TR


MANIMAL Can Yuki (left) trust Tohru with the family secret?

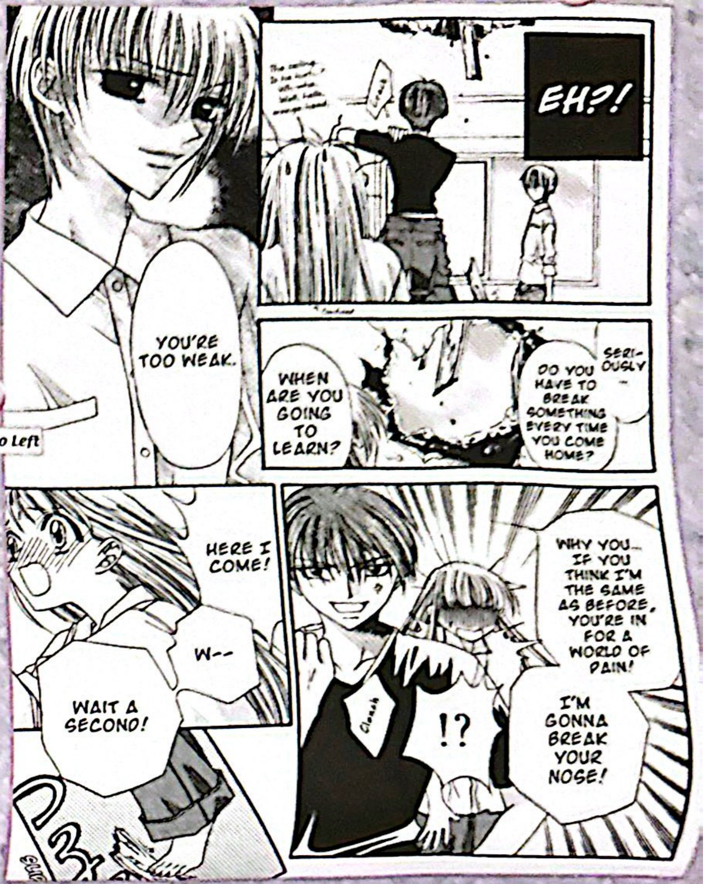
Start Here


IT FELT LIKE I WAS DREAMING.
SUDDENLY, I WAS LIVING IN SOHMA-KUN'S HOUSE...
COME TO THINK OF IT, WHERE ARE SOHMA-KUN'S PARENTS?
IT'S ALL TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.
I HOPE THEY DON'T MIND MY STAYING HERE.
Ba-dum
Ba-dum
Ba-dum
Ba-dum
Ba-dum

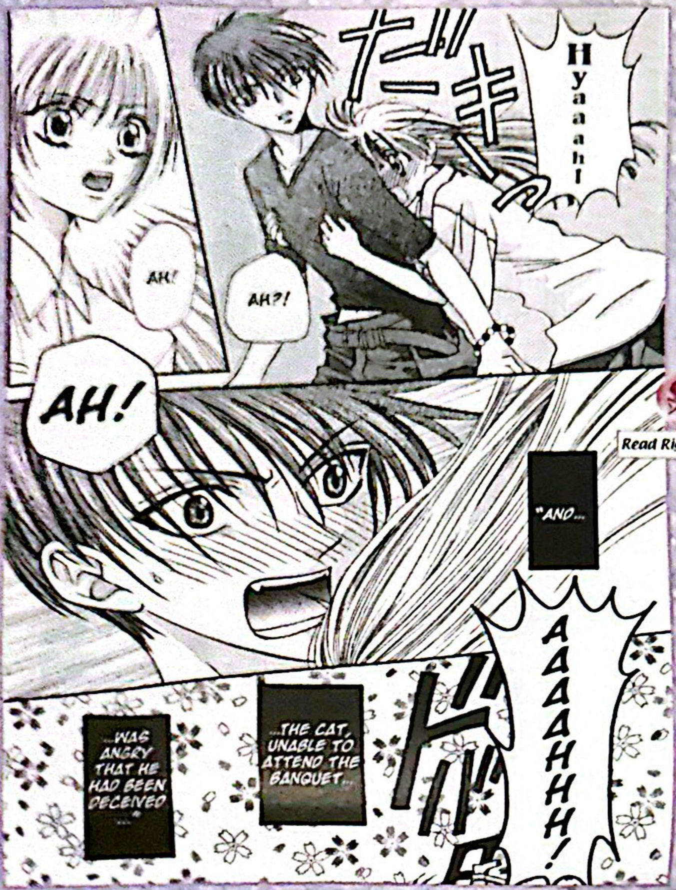
Read Right to Left


EH?
...YO.
ARE YOU READY FOR ME TO BREAK YOUR NECK...
...RATBOY?

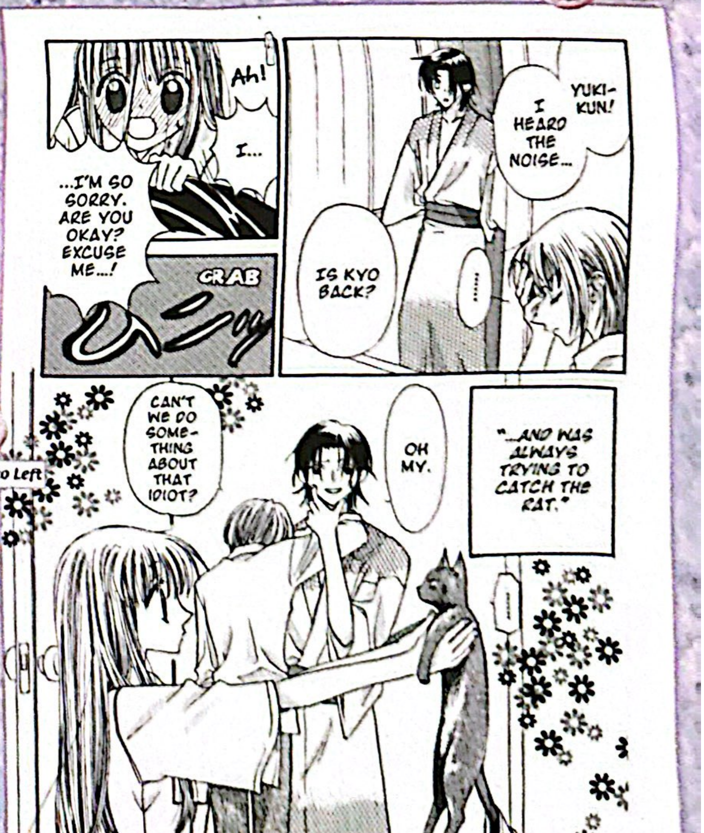
Cont'd Here


EH?!
YOU'RE TOO WEAK.
SERI-OUSLY
DO YOU HAVE TO BREAK SOMETHING EVERY TIME YOU COME HOME?
WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO LEARN?
WHY YOU... IF YOU THINK I'M THE SAME AS BEFORE, YOU'RE IN FOR A WORLD OF PAIN!
I'M GONNA BREAK YOUR NOSE!
!?
HERE I COME!
W--
WAIT A SECOND!

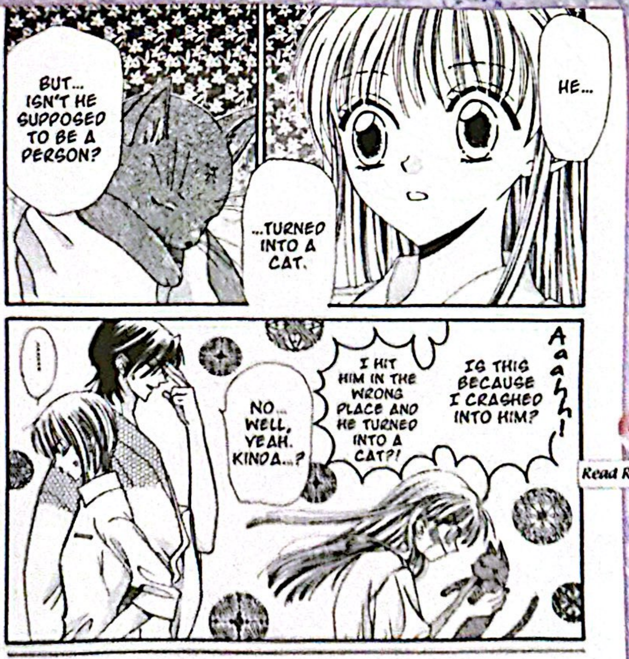
Read Right to Left


Hyaaah!
AH?!
AH!
AH!
"AND...
AAAAAHHH!
...THE CAT, UNABLE TO ATTEND THE BANQUET...
...WAS ANGRY THAT HE HAD BEEN DECEIVED..."

Cont'd Here


YUKI-KUN!
I HEARD THE NOISE...
AH!
I...
...I'M SO SORRY. ARE YOU OKAY? EXCUSE ME...!
GRAB
IS KYO BACK?
......
"...AND WAS ALWAYS TRYING TO CATCH THE RAT."
OH MY.
CAN'T WE DO SOME-THING ABOUT THAT IDIOT?

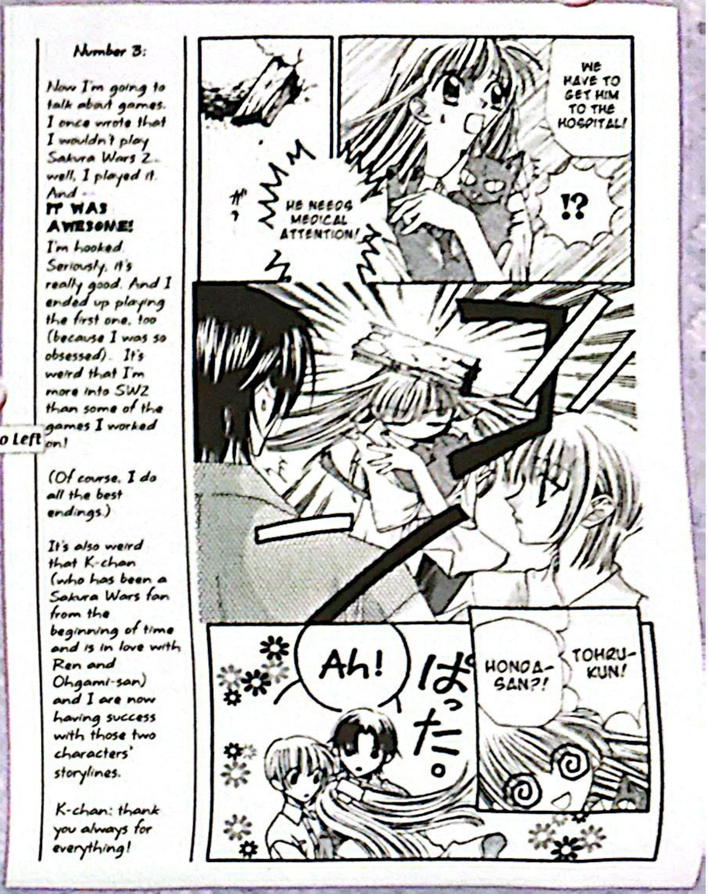
Read Right to Left


HE...
BUT... ISN'T HE SUPPOSED TO BE A PERSON?
...TURNED INTO A CAT.
Aaaah!
IS THIS BECAUSE I CRASHED INTO HIM?
I HIT HIM IN THE WRONG PLACE AND HE TURNED INTO A CAT?!
NO... WELL, YEAH. KINDA...?
......

ULTRA SPECIAL BLAH BLAH BLAH NUMBER 1

I got a letter from some smart aleck reminding me, "Didn't you say you wouldn't use English titles?" Well... I guess I did say that... And, actually, this book did have a Japanese title at first. But things happened (nothing really big) and it became "Fruits Basket." Sometimes that's just how it works.

Cont'd Here



Number 3:

Now I'm going to talk about games. I once wrote that I wouldn't play Sakura Wars 2... well, I played it. And...

IT WAS AWESOME!

I'm hooked. Seriously, it's really good. And I ended up playing the first one, too (because I was so obsessed). It's weird that I'm more into SW2 than some of the games I worked on!

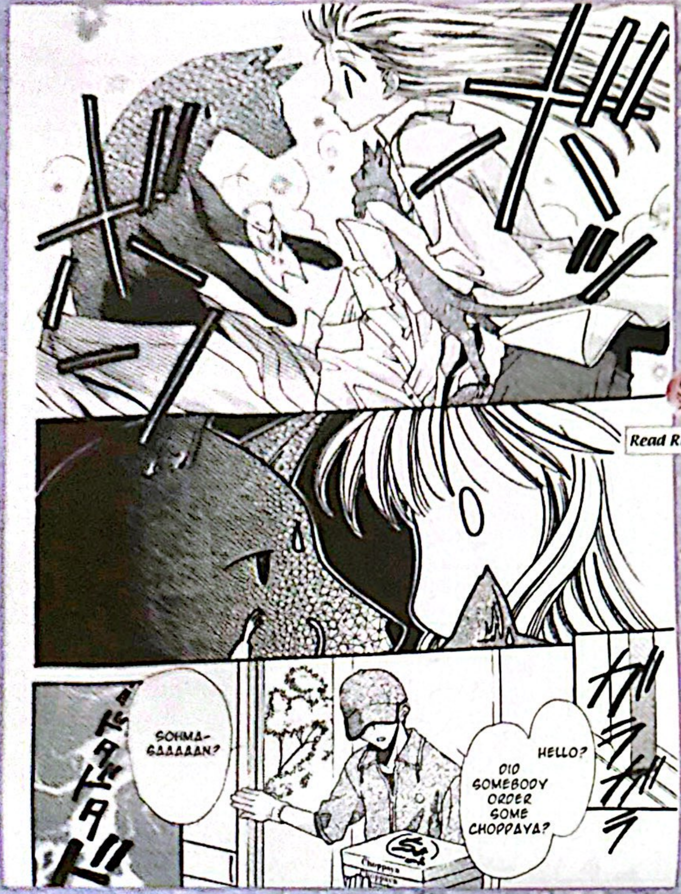
(Of course, I do all the best endings.)

It's also weird that K-chan (who has been a Sakura Wars fan from the beginning of time and is in love with Ren and Ohgami-san) and I are now having success with those two characters' storylines.

K-chan: thank you always for everything!

WE HAVE TO GET HIM TO THE HOSPITAL!
!?
HE NEEDS MEDICAL ATTENTION!
ガ
TOHRU-KUN!
HONDA-SAN?!
ぱった。
Ah!

Read Right to Left


HELLO?
DID SOMEBODY ORDER SOME CHOPPAYA?
ガラガラ
SOHMA-SAAAAAN?
ドタドタ

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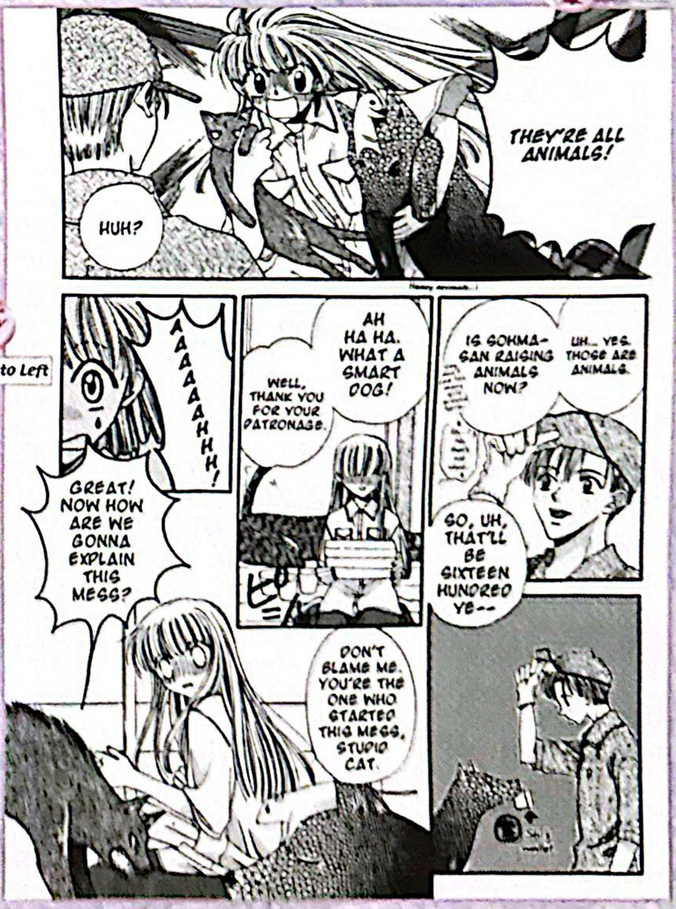
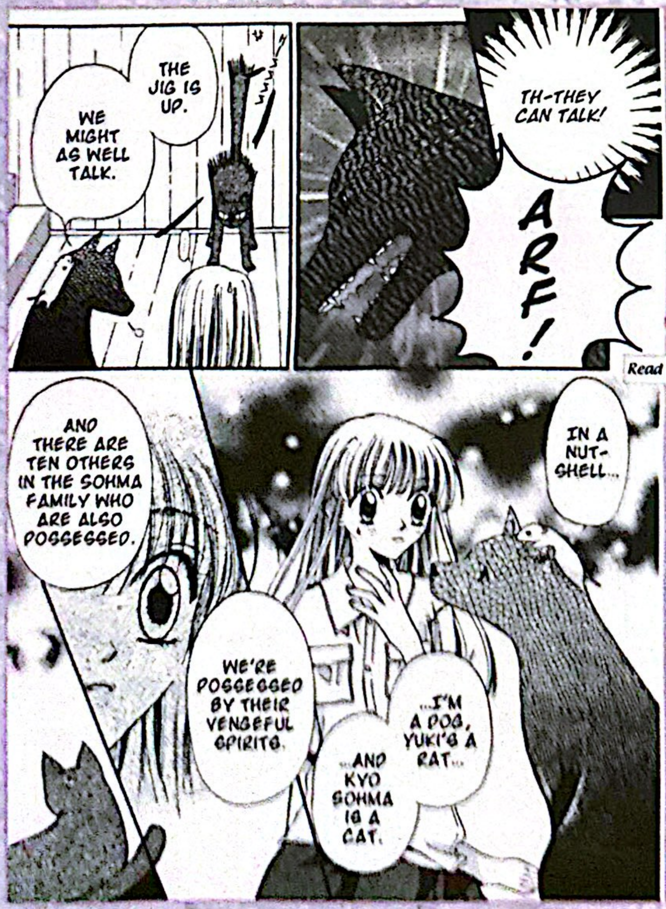
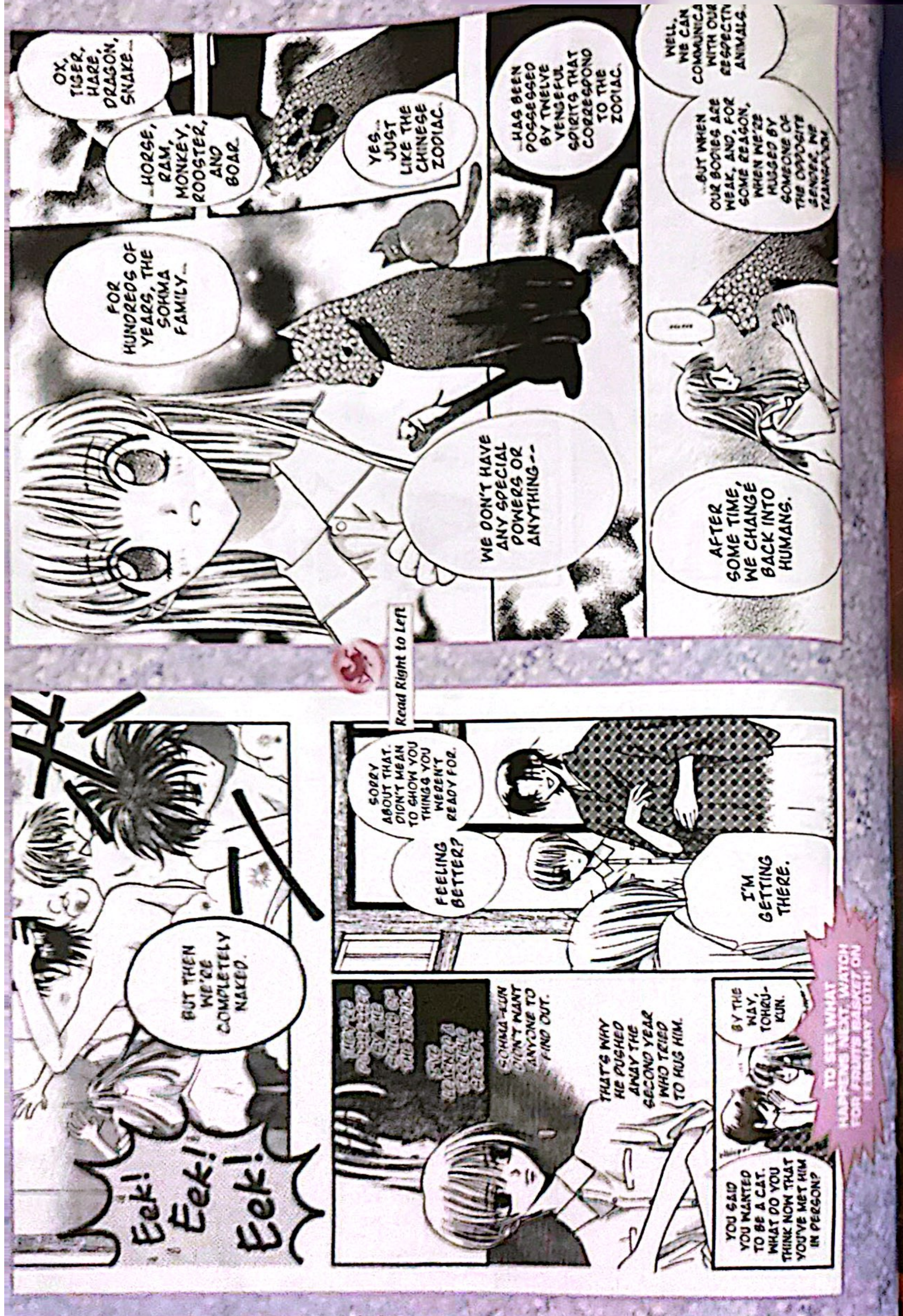

THEY'RE ALL ANIMALS!
HUH?
UH... YES. THOSE ARE ANIMALS.
IS SOHMA-SAN RAISING ANIMALS NOW?
AH HA HA. WHAT A SMART DOG!
WELL, THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATRONAGE.
AAAAAAAHH!
SO, UH, THAT'LL BE SIXTEEN HUNDRED YE--
GREAT! NOW HOW ARE WE GONNA EXPLAIN THIS MESS?
DON'T BLAME ME. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO STARTED THIS MESS, STUPID CAT.

Read Right to Left


TH-THEY CAN TALK!
ARF!
THE JIG IS UP.
WE MIGHT AS WELL TALK.
IN A NUTSHELL...
...I'M A DOG, YUKI'S A RAT...
...AND KYO SOHMA IS A CAT.
WE'RE POSSESSED BY THEIR VENGEFUL SPIRITS.
AND THERE ARE TEN OTHERS IN THE SOHMA FAMILY WHO ARE ALSO POSSESSED.


OX, TIGER, HARE, DRAGON, SNAKE...
...HORSE, RAM, MONKEY, ROOSTER, AND BOAR.
FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS, THE SOHMA FAMILY...
...HAS BEEN POSSESSED BY TWELVE VENGEFUL SPIRITS THAT CORRESPOND TO THE ZODIAC.
YES... JUST LIKE THE CHINESE ZODIAC.
WE DON'T HAVE ANY SPECIAL POWERS OR ANYTHING--
WELL, WE CAN COMMUNICATE WITH OUR RESPECTIVE ANIMALS.
...BUT WHEN OUR BODIES ARE WEAK, AND FOR SOME REASON, WHEN WE'RE HUGGED BY SOMEONE OF THE OPPOSITE SEX, WE TRANSFORM.
AFTER SOME TIME, WE CHANGE BACK INTO HUMANS.
Read Right to Left
BUT THEN WE'RE COMPLETELY NAKED.
Eek! Eek! Eek!
SORRY ABOUT THAT. DIDN'T MEAN TO SHOW YOU THINGS YOU WEREN'T READY FOR.
FEELING BETTER?
I'M GETTING THERE.
SOHMA-KUN DIDN'T WANT ANYONE TO FIND OUT.
THAT'S WHY HE PUSHED AWAY THE SECOND YEAR WHO TRIED TO HUG HIM.
BY THE WAY, TOHRU-KUN.
YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO BE A CAT. WHAT DO YOU THINK NOW THAT YOU'VE MET HIM IN PERSON?
TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, WATCH FRUITS BASKET ON FEBRUARY 10TH!

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LOST in the SHADOWS

HOW YUGI'S ILLUSIONS OF TERROR KEPT HIS SERIES OUT OF AMERICA

By Lianne Sentar

Pop quiz, hot shots. Which of the following situations has Yugi *never* faced? Is it a) a color-coding terrorist, b) a lollipop-obsessed stalker, or c) Tristan in a squid suit?

Think you know? Well, you're *wrong*, smart guy. Believe it or not, *all* of these things happened in the first *Yu-Gi-Oh!* series, only you've never seen it before.

The *Yu-Gi-Oh!* episodes animated by NAS/Studio Gallop are what you've seen, but a short series by an entirely different studio—Toei, of *Dragon Ball Z* and *Sailor Moon* fame—aired on Japanese TV first in 1998. These stories follow the *Yu-Gi-Oh!* manga currently running in Viz's *Shonen Jump* anthology and feature Yugi proving his gaming mettle through a variety of random games, with the famous card game mostly out of sight. But the best parts are when Yugi gets downright violent when dealing out his own drand of brutal justice to the baddies, though the punishing illusions of his Shadow Games! It's this violence, plus the lack of the popular card game, that's left this series out in the cold.

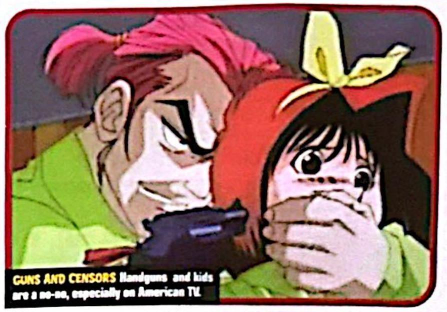
There are currently no plans to get this series here in the States, so you'll have to read on to check out all the action you can't watch!

YUGI REX If you thought Yami Yugi was scary, you ain't seen nuthin' yet!

1. THE GAME OF DARKNESS' VIOLENT BATTLE

After receiving the "unsolvable" Egyptian Millennium Puzzle from his grandpa, little Yugi Motou figures it out (natch). Rushing to defend classmates Joey and Tristan from a bully, the soul of an Egyptian pharaoh empowers Yugi's body from within the unlocked puzzle. Yugi is transformed into a darker version of himself, Yami Yugi, who challenges the bully to a game and through it saves his new friends.

BRUISIN' ILLUSION After dumping the bully in a stream, Yugi adds in killer eels for good measure.



GUNS AND CENSORS Handguns and kids are a no-no, especially on American TV.

2. A HELLISH TRAP WITH A DEVILISH GAMER

Yugi's friend (and crush) Tea's fast food job is a trial in itself, but one day an escaped convict escapes to her restaurant and takes her hostage. Yami Yugi saves her by challenging the crook to game of nerves with alcohol and fire. Don't try this at home!

BRUISIN' ILLUSION Yugi sets the criminal on imaginary fire. Whatta burn!

3. THE STRONGEST MONSTERS CLASH!

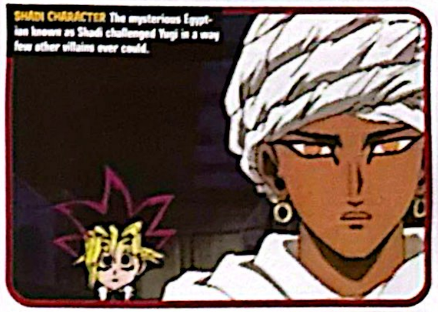
We first learn about Duel Monsters—an addictive card game based off an ancient and paranormal Egyptian counterpart—when rich transfer student Seto Kaiba steals Yugi's grandfather's Blue-Eyes White Dragon card. Yami Yugi quickly teaches Kaiba the folly of depending on swiped goods.

BRUISIN' ILLUSION The monster illustrations on the cards come to life; Kaiba feels defeat first-claw.

4. THE RARE WATCH GETS STOLEN!

A watch collector off the deep end steals a watch belonging to Tristan's ditzy crush Miho. Yugi hates jerks and thieves, so he decides to retrieve it.

BRUISIN' ILLUSION Yugi turns the collector's insides into gears, creeping out all viewers.



SHADI CHARACTER The mysterious Egyptian known as Shadi challenged Yugi in a way few other villains ever could.

5. LET YUGI'S SECRET BE KNOWN!

A magical Egyptian stranger named Shadi plays his own dark games with a lying museum curator. When Yugi decides to put an end to it, Shadi finds Yugi's alter ego intriguing. After they challenge each other, Yugi almost knocks Shadi into an abyss, but saves him at the last second. He'll regret it...

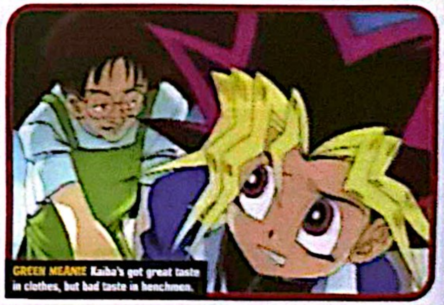
6. A DESPERATE SITUATION IN A SHOWDOWN OF PASSIONATE FRIENDSHIP

Shadi repays Yami Yugi's kindness by turning Yugi's friends into zombies and releasing a monster on the school roof. Yugi's faith in his friends, as well as solving Shadi's puzzle, saves everyone. Shadi goes home...for now.

7. AN UNDERHANDED TRICK IN THE DIGITAL PET AFFAIR

Digital pets are all the rage at Yugi's school, but a crazy classmate takes things a *tad* too far when he kidnaps Miho and her digital pet, because it's superior to his own.

BRUISIN' ILLUSION The kid's digital companion gets awfully big and goes for a crazy classmate sandwich.



GREEN MEANIE Kaiba's got great taste in clothes, but bad taste in benchmen.

8. THE GAME'S BIG FOUR FINALLY MOVE

A still-stewing Kaiba sets his first crony against Yugi, a creepy puppet master. When Yugi defeats him, Kaiba retreats to a corner and broods.

BRUISIN' ILLUSION: The real Duel Monsters make an appearance again. These guys really know how to kill a party.

YO-YO MAMA! Sure it's scary, but can he also Walk the Dog with it?

9. THE SECRET OF THE EXPLODING YO-YO

Joey is coerced into joining an evil yo-yo gang—no joke—and Yugi must utilize his own yo-yo skills to fight the punks off. This episode also features the strangest fight ever: Gang Leader With Spiked Yo-Yo versus Tristan With Broom. Yikes.

10. THE SECRET MASK OF THE BEAUTIFUL TEACHER

A classmate has a secret crush on Joey, but their nasty teacher tries to humiliate the poor girl by revealing it. Yami Yugi saves face for the girl—but not the teacher.

BRUISIN' ILLUSION: The teacher's pretty face is transformed into a kisser that matches her ugly personality.

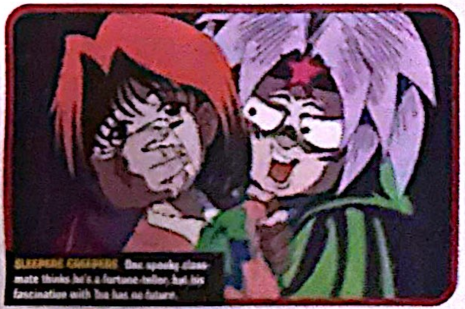
11. INTRODUCING THE CAPSULE MONSTERS!

The new fighting game with monsters from capsule machines seems harmless enough, but a creepy player who's stalking Miho challenges Yugi over her!

BRUISIN' ILLUSION: The gross stalker and his stench are tossed into a giant capsule of their own.

12. THE MYTH OF THE INVINCIBLE LUCKY FOE

A student with extraordinary luck gets roped in by Kaiba and faces Yami Yugi's Memory game. Yugi's tricky win breaks the kid's lucky streak, so Kaiba broods. Again.


SLEEPING CREEPERS One spooky classmate thinks he's a fortune-teller, but his fascination with Tea has no future.

13. FANG OF PROPHECY

A fortune-telling classmate who plays dangerous tricks to fulfill his predictions holds a frightening interest in Tea.

BRUISIN' ILLUSION: Since Yugi incorporates a *real* bottle of chloroform into this Shadow Game, the villain spends his humiliating defeat asleep on the floor.

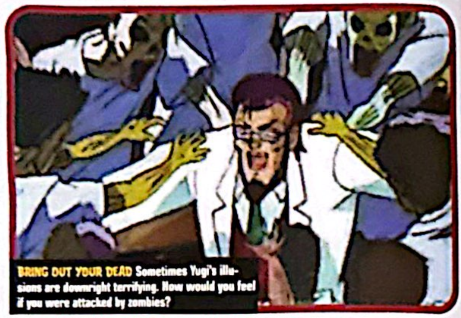
14. AN EXPLOSIVE GAME ON THE CRUMMIEST DATE

Yugi and Tea go out on a date, only to be interrupted by a terrorist. Yami Yugi helps the cops flush him out, and Tea finally learns of Yugi's alter ego.

BRUISIN' ILLUSION: The terrorist becomes a bomb victim for an explosive bit of irony.

15. I CAN'T TRANSFORM!

A gorgeous classmate is in love with Yugi? Alas, she's actually an evil witch who just wants his rare Duel Monsters card. Kaiba shows up to save Yugi, strangely enough.


BRING OUT YOUR DEAD Sometimes Yugi's illusions are downright terrifying. How would you feel if you were attacked by zombies?

16. THE DOCTOR'S GOWN CRISIS

Yugi meets Joey's bed-ridden younger sister Serenity when Joey visits on her birthday. After a nasty doctor shows up, Yami Yugi defeats the physician at an odd game of Shadow golf.

BRUISIN' ILLUSION: Five words: zombie patients back for revenge.

17. A MODEL CALLS A HIGH STAKES MATCH

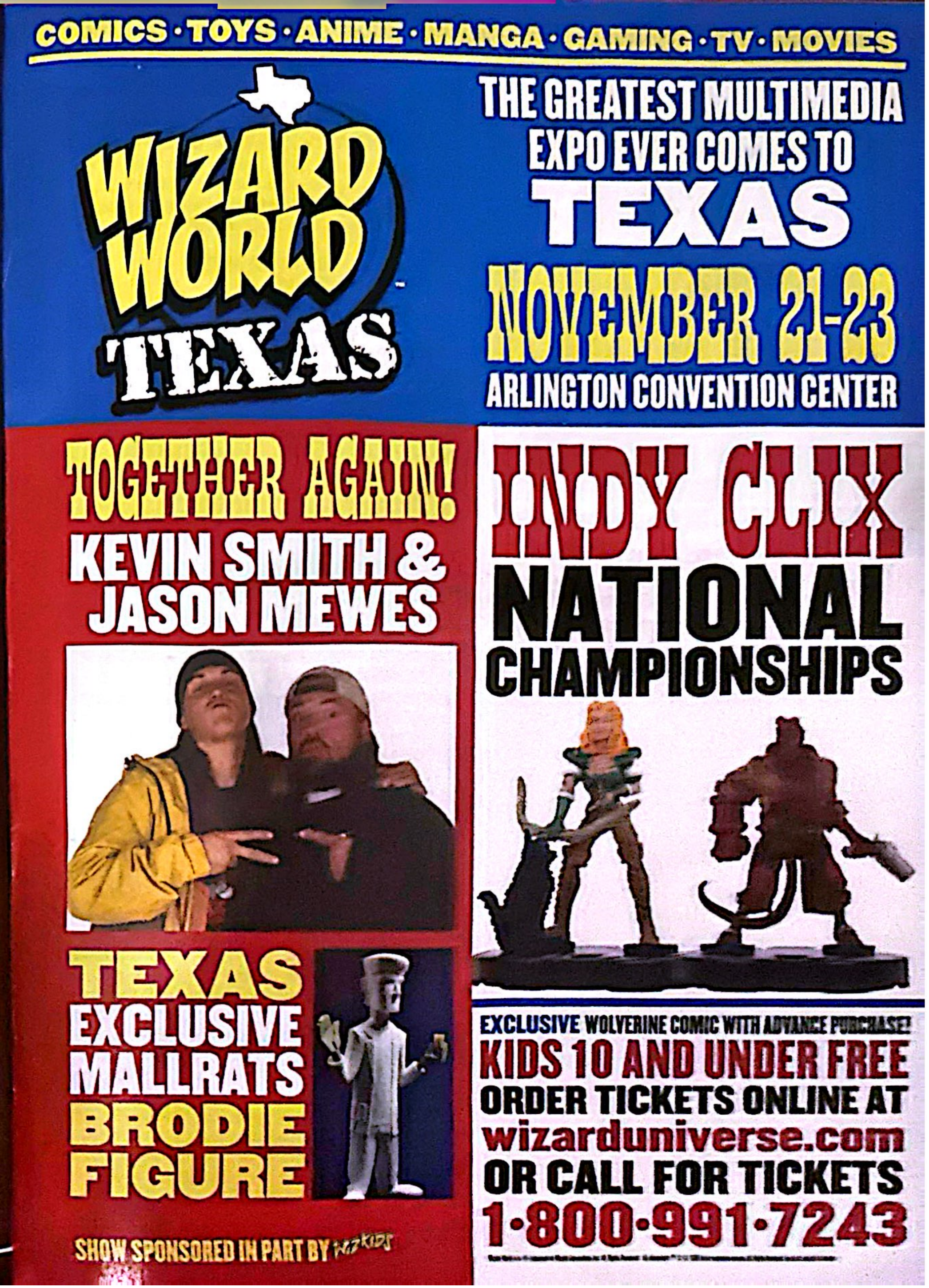
Kaiba persuades a beautiful, brilliant supermodel to challenge Yugi to an Eastern board game for Tea's life. Despite her loss, the model gets off scot-free for being penitent.

18. DON'T MESS WITH FORBIDDEN GAMES

Yugi and a new friend discover a sealed board game and fall under its curse, *Jumanji*-style. Yami Yugi defeats his possessed pal to gain their souls back; the game goes back in the closet.

19. THE POPULARITY CONTEST

There's a beauty contest and a jealous saboteur, but the real kick is seeing a Bakura cameo and Joey in drag!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BRUISIN ILLUSION Yugi shows the saboteur that cheaters never prosper and they're really ugly to boot.

20. THE FINAL MIGHTIEST TRUMP CARD

Kaiba sinks to a new low when he sends an elderly gamer to Yugi for a Duel Monsters match. When Yugi still wins, Kaiba throws a fit and prepares to sink to an even *newer* low.

THE DEADLIEST GAMES This lost *Yu-Gi-Oh* series featured some violent moments. At times, you didn't know if everyone would survive!

21. THE ULTIMATE GAMELAND IS COMPLETED!

Kaiba spirits away Yugi's grandfather to the booby-trapped Kaiba Land theme park. Yugi and his friends arrive to save Grandpa, and to face Kaiba's little brother Mokuba and shifty Millennium Ring-wearing classmate Bakura.

22. SHOOTING TO THE POINT OF COLLAPSE

As thousands watch, Yugi and friends enter Kaiba's "Death T"—a gauntlet of perilous games with Yugi's grandfather at the end. The first two challenges involve laser tag with real lasers and an evil robotic steamroller.

23. CLIMACTIC SHOWDOWN OF THE CAPSULE MONSTER KING

After losing Tristan to a game of real-life *Tetris*, Yugi must face Mokuba's capsule monsters—but not before telling the rest of his friends about his alter ego. Bolstered by their support, Yami Yugi triumphs over Mokuba.

T FOR TWO Freaky monsters and even more freaky lighting effects await in Kaiba's Death T.

24. THE FINAL HOUR

In the final stage of the Death T, Yugi and Kaiba duel while Joey and Miho fight past Kaiba's cronies in a Duel Monsters game. The power of loyalty (and five Exodia cards) wins the battle.

25. THE BISHONEN ATTACKS

But what about Bakura? The wicked soul inside his Millennium Ring finally enters his body, and Yami Bakura traps Yugi and his friends in game pieces for a deadly monster match. It's up to Yami Yugi, still in Yugi's skin, to lead the pieces with his friends' souls to victory.

26. THE BIGGEST PINCH

Yugi Motou finally meets his alter-ego Yami Yugi face-to-face. But while *his* other half is brave and loyal, Bakura's dark side proves his hidden personality isn't quite so admirable.

27. FRIENDSHIP—FROM LEGEND TO MYTH

Bakura's better half breaks free from the Ring's hold and joins Yugi and friends on the game board. Through the power of friendship and Bakura's strong will, they defeat the spirit. Now, who's ready for some Duel Monsters? ●

Connecticut-based freelance writer Lianne Senter thought she won the lottery, but it was just another cruel illusion.

HAIL TO THE KING

King of Games Rules with New 'Yu-Gi-Oh!' Set

Even with mounting competition from a new crop of anime collectible card games—*Beyblade*, *.hack//*, *Initial D* and *Yu Yu Hakusho* to name a few—*Yu-Gi-Oh!* is still riding high as king. The world championships in New York late this summer drew record numbers of fans and marked a high point for the game.

If all that excitement whets your appetite for some serious card floppin', tournament season three has already started. To register, learn more about prizes or to find a tournament location near you and more, surf on over to the Duelist King Tournament site at www.upperdeckentertainment.com/yugioh. This site also contains checklists for all card sets up to this point, tournament coverage and updated rules, as well as a special area dedicated to registered duelists.

If that isn't enough, the game's latest expansion *Magician's Force* hit the stores in October containing cards from the original *Descent of Union* and *Champion of Black Magicians* Japanese sets. Six different tins containing booster packs of newly retired sets also went on sale in early fall, each with its own variant card—just in time for the holidays. Let the dueling commence! ■ **Brent Fishbaugh**

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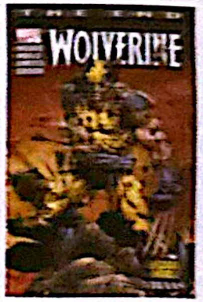

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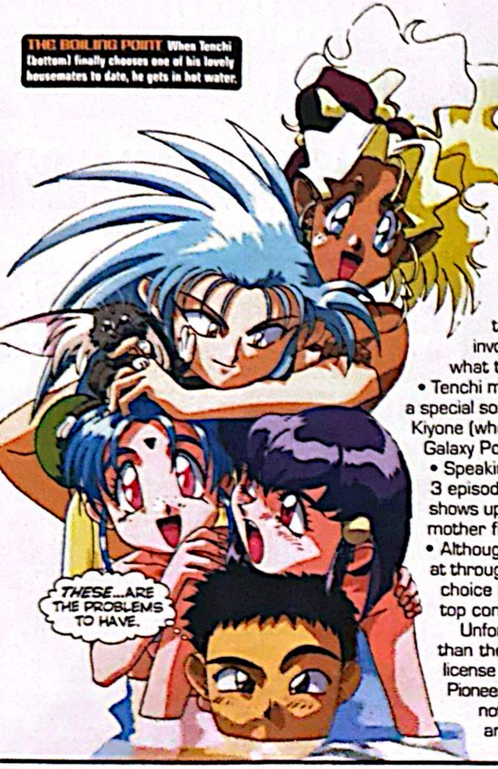
MUCHO 'MUYO'

TENCHI PICKS HIS GIRL IN THE LONG-AWAITED 'TENCHI MUYO' FINALE


THESE...ARE THE PROBLEMS TO HAVE.

THE BOILING POINT When Tenchi (bottom) finally chooses one of his lovely housemates to date, he gets in hot water.

One of anime's most anticipated questions is about to be answered: Who will Tenchi pick? Creator Masaki Kajishima has gone on record that in the six-episode, third *Tenchi Muyo* OVA series—the first episode of which was just released in Japan this September—the hapless high school savior of the galaxy Tenchi Masaki finally picks a girl.

Fans never got an answer to whether Tenchi chooses the beautiful and feisty space pirate Ryoko or the fiery Juraian princess Aeka since *Tenchi Muyo* was first released in 1991. But despite several TV series and OVA sequels, Tenchi never chose—driving fans crazy when the last TV series, *Tenchi in Tokyo*, came out in 1997.

Japanese fans will get their answer in 2004 when the last episode comes out. But there's even more involved than just Tenchi's women woes in this OVA. Here's what to expect:

- Tenchi might not be the only lucky bachelor; his father may find a special someone and remarry after the death of Tenchi's mother, Kiyone (who, incidentally, is not the same as the Kiyone from the Galaxy Police who hangs around with Tenchi).
- Speaking of Tenchi's mother, at the very end of the first OVA 3 episode, a woman with the spitting visage of long-lost Kiyone shows up on Tenchi's doorstep! Will the mystery surrounding his mother finally be solved?
- Although Tenchi will definitely choose his girl, it's been hinted at throughout all of the various Tenchi incarnations that his final choice may or may not be between Ryoko and Aeka, the two top contenders for Tenchi's hand.

Unfortunately for American fans, they'll have to wait longer than their Japanese counterparts. No one has announced the license to the third *Tenchi Muyo* OVA series; Geneon (formerly Pioneer), who holds the license to the previous *Tenchi* series, has not only denied having it, but has also gone on record that another company entirely has licensed it. ■ Zac Bertschy

FAST FORWARD

QUICK PEEKS AT THE NEXT BIG VIDEOS

KUROSAWA POWER Bandai recently announced the license for *Kaze no Yojimbo*, a new anime series based on famous director Akira Kurosawa's film *Yojimbo*. Created by Studio Pierrot (of *Yu Yu Hakusho* and *Naruto* fame), the setting has been updated, and the series was directed by Hayato Date, who also helmed *Naruto*.

ASTRONOMIC PRICE The long-awaited space opera *Legend of Galactic Heroes* DVD box set has been announced as having the hefty price point of $1,700, including all 110 episodes, 54 side story episodes and three movies! Once the petition to release the series reaches 1,500 signatures, the Japanese producers will set an American release date.

FOR THE CHILDREN Videogamers, rejoice: The best-selling RPG *Final Fantasy VII* will get a sequal...on DVD. Set two years after the game's conclusion, *Advent Children* will finally settle the fate of ex-mercenary Cloud and the planet after the original cliffhanger ending. The DVD is due Summer of 2004 in Japan, with a U.S. release to be determined.

FFVII: ADVENT CHILDREN

ON THE SHELF

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR ANIME STORES THIS DECEMBER?

ARGENTOSOMA VOL. 6

In the final volume, a gigantic alien weapon is headed straight for Earth, and the only one who can stop it is Frank. (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)

BANNER OF THE STARS II VOL. 3

Lafiel and Jinto's adventures come to a satisfying and beautiful close; see what becomes of the war, of the humans, and of the Abh as the unlikely duo change the course of history. (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)

BIG O II VOL. 1

Follow the continuing adventures of Roger Smith and his robotic ward Dorothy as they fight to keep Paradigm City safe from mysterious invaders. (Bandai, DVD, $24.98)

CITY HUNTER TV SEASON 3

Rejoin Ryu Saeba and his gang of crazy characters as they foil scheme after scheme. There's no job (or woman) Ryu Saeba can't handle! (ADV, DVD, $44.98)

CORRECTOR YUI VOL. 3

The seemingly endless battle with GROSSER gets turned up a notch, as Yui is faced with more danger than ever before. (Viz, DVD, $24.98)

EDEN'S BOWY VOL. 6

It's the end of a climactic war, and the close of a long journey on the part of Yorn and his crew of stalwart adventurers. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

FINAL FANTASY UNLIMITED VOL. 2

Hayakawa Ai and Yu's endless adventures with Hatsufist Lisa continue, based on the unbelievably successful videogame franchise. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

GENMA WARS COLLECTION BOX SET

Two brothers are separated as babies, one sent to the evil lord Genma to take his place, the other to be raised among his native people. When the two battle it out, nobody is safe! (Media Blasters, DVD, $39.95)

GTO BOX SET 1

For the first time in boxed set form, one of the most popular anime shows of all time. See how—and why—a former motorcycle punk decides to become Great Teacher Onizuka! (TOKYOPOP, DVD, $99.99)

HAIBANE RENMEI VOL. 3

As more mysteries about the true nature of Old Home are revealed, a slew of new questions pop up. Can Rekka unravel the secrets of her own existence? (Geneon, DVD, $29.98)

HEAT GUY J VOL. 3

Daisuke and J combat a horde of dangerous, knife-licking mafia types who will stop at nothing to see the cybernetic crusader and his suave partner go down in flames! (Geneon, DVD, $29.98)

INU-YASHA VOL. 12 & 13

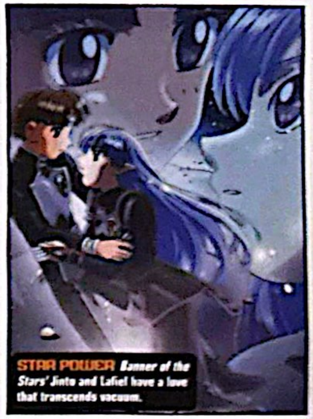
It's a furious fighting frenzy as Inu-Yasha and Kagome (along with a large supporting cast) continue to fight the evil Naraku and his seemingly endless wave of corruption. (Viz, DVD, $24.98)

INU-YASHA SPECIAL LIMITED SET 1

Includes the first nine episodes of the series; relive the adventure as Kagome enters the Bone Eater's Well and discovers a world beyond her imagination! (Viz, DVD, $49.98)

KIKAIDER VOL. 3

Jiro comes ever closer to revealing the secrets behind his tortured past. Can Jiro overcome his own inner demons long enough to take out the bad guys? (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)



STAR POWER *Banner of the Stars'* Jinto and Lafiel have a love that transcends vacuum.

LEGEND OF THE MYSTICAL NINJA VOL. 1

A hilarious new anime series based on the popular *Goemon* action games, from Konami. The series follows the adventures of Ganbare Goemon, a spunky little ninja who uses his ninjitsu powers to rob from the rich and give to the poor. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

HOT PICK

MAGICAL SHOPPING ARCADE ABENOBASHI VOL 1

December 16 on DVD, $29.98 alone or $39.98 with art box, ADV Films

Thought Gainax couldn't get any crazier than *FLCL*? Watch out for *Magical Shopping District Abenobashi*! Sasshi's summer vacation is getting worse by the day: his house was ripped down, thanks to the reconstruction of the Abenobashi Shopping District, and he lost all of his vending machine toys and baseball cards in the demolition. His grandfather is having an affair with his best friend Ayumi's grandmother, and to make matters worse, while they're investigating the affair, they discover that the spiritual health of the shopping district is hanging on by a thin thread! When Sasshi's grandfather is injured in an accident, one of the few remaining spiritual guardian poles is destroyed, sending Abenobashi into total chaos, and thrusting Sasshi and Ayumi on a dimension-hopping trip through the Abenobashis that exist in alternate realities. This highly anticipated series plays out like a series of hilarious anime parodies, roasting everything from *Evangelion* to *Sailor Moon* to *Lupin III* in the process. The signature Gainax style and humor are in full force, showcased in all 13 episodes. The humor rockets by at a mile a minute, and every episode features a different Abenobashi, so get ready; anything can happen in *Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi*! ■ ZB

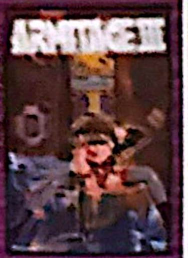
HE'S AT THE 30! THE 20! HE COULD GO ALL THE WAY!
NOT LIKELY.

SASSHI & AYUMI

EASTERN EGGS

HIDDEN SECRETS OF YOUR FAVORITE DVDS

ARMITAGE III
Enter the "extras" menu. Highlight the option to view the LD covers and press up. You'll notice that Armitage's sunglasses are highlighted. Press enter, and you'll be treated to a special drawing of Armitage wishing you a happy new year, and a signature from the director!



DUAL! VOL. 3
There are two hidden animations on this disc. Go to the extras menu and select character data. Press right or left and you'll see the first one, involving Kazuki. If you then go to Character Data page 1, highlight extras again and push up. Hit enter, and you'll see the second secret animation.

EL-HAZARD: THE MAGNIFICENT WORLD
On disc 2, select DVD credits. Press enter. While the credits are playing, press up and enter for a special message from a highly inebriated Fujisawa, berating you for not watching the credits!

MAHOROMATIC VOL. 3
Go to the extras menu and highlight credits. Press right, and you'll see "extras" highlighted. Press enter to see a montage of all the times Mahoro sings in the series, either in English or Japanese!

MAZE VOL. 1
In the special features menu, select "meet the characters." If you select Mill and press up, her name will be highlighted. Pressing enter will display a series of images from the show, all featuring Mill using her non-word power in a number of situations.

From the creator of *Love Hina!* It's up to Mao-chan, Misora-chan and Sylvia-chan to stop an invading race of ridiculously cute aliens from making off with Japan's most famous landmarks. (Geneon, DVD, $29.98)

MASTER KEATON VOL. 4

Another volume of the long-running detective series *Master Keaton.* This time, Keaton thwarts a bevy of evildoers, uncovers secret treasures, saves the girl, and gives Matlock a run for his money. (Geneon, DVD, $29.98)

MIRAGE OF BLAZE VOL. 4

Takaya, Chiaki, Naoe and Yuzura scour the land looking for evil spirits, hoping to vanquish the ever-increasing Feudal Underworld before it's too late. (Media Blasters, DVD, $29.98)

NEORANGA VOL. 6

The final volume of *NeoRanga* finds our three heroines struggling to find a compromise between the ancient beast they control, Ranga, and the city they so love. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

ORPHEN II VOL. 1

The sequel to *Sorcerous Stabber Orphen* focuses entirely on Orphen's past in the Magic Academy and his days training to eventually become the most powerful magician in the world. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

SADAMITSU THE DESTROYER VOL. 1

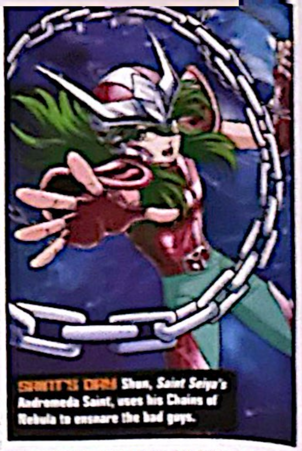
Based on a legendary live-action sentai series, Sadamitsu follows the adventures of a hard-driving, rough-living motorcycle punk with the amazing ability to transform into Sadamitsu, a powerful man on a mission to right the wrongs of the world. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

SAINT SEIYA VOL. 2

Thrill to the endless battles of the Zodiac Knights as they bravely fight on in the Galaxian Wars, struggling to keep it together. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

SAKURA TAISEN OVA: ECOLE DE PARIS

An unconventional entry in the *Sakura Taisen* legacy, this new OVA series focuses on the women of the Paris Kagekidan and their lives before it formed. (FUNimation, DVD, $9.98)



SAINT'S OWN Shun, *Saint Seiya's* Andromeda Saint, uses his Chains of Nebula to ensnare the bad guys.

SAMURAI DEEPER KYO VOL. 4

"Demon Eyes" Kyo continues to slice a bloody path across Japan in the fouth volume of this fan favorite. A veritable cornucopia of new demons crawl out of the woodwork, all looking to slay Kyo. (Media Blasters, DVD, $29.98)

STEAM DETECTIVES VOL. 2

More adventures in Steam City with Narutaki and his faithful sidekicks, Nurse Ling Ling Hsu and Goriki, a robot with a human brain. Evil from beneath the mist strikes back; will it be too much for Narutaki to handle? (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

SUPER GALS VOL. 3

Ran and her gang of stylish girls take back the streets of Shibuya from the stuck-up masses of the fashion world, and learn a few valuable lessons along the way. She won't take crap from anyone! (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

WITCH HUNTER ROBIN VOL. 2

The plot thickens as Robin's true purpose at the STNJ is called into question, and Amon puts the pressure on her to learn how to really control her mysterious Craft power. When the motives of Factory are called into question, it's every hunter for himself! (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)

YU YU HAKUSHO VOL. 19

The dark tournament finally comes to a brutal and bloody finale as Yusuke finally gets his match with the Toguro brothers. But even if he wins, will it be enough to save the human world? (FUNimation, DVD, $24.98)

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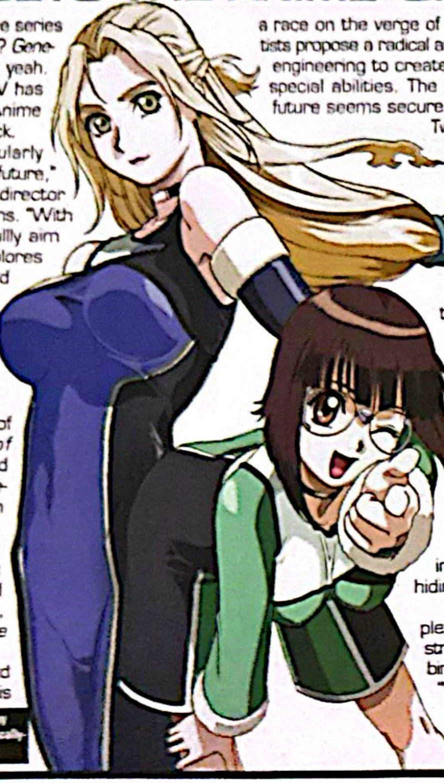
'GENE' THERAPY

TECH TV GETS THE ANIME 'SHAFT'



GIRL POWER Mia Lotus (left) and Remmy Leistars are two of the super-powered, genetically-engineered crew of the Shaft.

What's the sci-fi anime series with the funky name? *Geneshaft*, baby Awww, yeah. And that's the series TechTV has picked up to appear in its Anime Unleashed programming block.

"*Geneshaft* has a particularly strong hard-sci-fi vision of the future," says Laura Civiello, TechTV's director of acquisitions and commissions. "With anime unleashed, we especiallly aim for anime that thoughtfully explores the information of humans and technology. Its future society and its relation to genetic engineering and other breakthroughs are richly detailed, and this was one of the big draws for us."

Directed by Kazuki Akane (of *Heat Guy J* and *Vision of Escaflowne* fame) and licensed by Bandai Entertainment, *Geneshaft* ran 13 episodes in Japan in 2001. It was produced by Bandai Visual and Studio Satelight, known for their combining cel and computer generated animation in *Metropolis*, *Macross Zero* and the *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust* Movie.

After centuries of abusing and exploiting the earth, humanity is a race on the verge of extinction. An elite group of scientists propose a radical and desperate solution—using genetic engineering to create a new race of humans gifted with special abilities. The plan is a success, and humanity's future seems secure.

Two hundred years later, a mysterious artifact appears in orbit between Earth and the moon after scientists discover the ruins of an ancient alien civilization on Jupiter's moon Ganymede. This seemingly harmless object has the potential to obliterate all of humanity and the entire earth as well. A specially assembled team is sent on the ship Bilkis with the prototype robot "Shaft" to investigate the artifact. But the artifact itself is the least of their worries. The Bilkis crew is wanted for desertion for leaving on their mission without apparent orders, the Shaft still has kinks to be worked out, and a terrorist who will stop at nothing to ensure that the mission fails is hiding amongst the team.

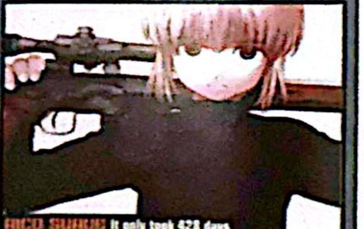
"*Geneshaft* has great action, a complex and well-thought-out future world, strong characters and a well-done combination of CG and cel work," says Civiello. "We're excited to show it!" *Geneshaft* is tentatively scheduled to premiere next March. ■ Caitlin Moriarty

TUNE IN TOKYO

CHECK OUT THE LATEST ANIME THAT'S ON THE AIR ONLY IN JAPAN

GUNSLINGER GIRL▼

Every society has people who are homeless, friendless and alone. These unfortunates are invisible to most people....and it's this invisibility that makes them so valuable to the Social Welfare Agency, a sinister consortium masquerading as a benevolent not-for-profit group. Angelica, Claes, Henrietta, Rico and Triela are five young women who have been kidnapped and brainwashed by the Social Welfare Agency. Trained as deadly assassins and given mechanical components, these girls have lost any vestige of a conscience and kill without a trace of remorse. But these cyborg assassins may not be as dead inside as their employers believe. Produced by Bandai Visual in Japan, who also made an accompanying Playstation 2 game. There's no word on if or when it will find its way over here, but the manga (first run in *Dengeki Daioh*) came out from ADV Manga in November. ■ CM



RICO SUAVE It only took 428 days for Rico to get her firearms permit.

MORE DOG DAYS

IT'S DOUBLE THE 'INU-YASHA' IN 2004

All you screaming *Inu-Yasha* fans who keep asking if your favorite show has been canceled can rest easy. Cartoon Network officials have promised that over 50 episodes featuring anime's best-loved half-dog-demon will air during 2004.

This will more than double the amount of *Inu-Yasha* that's aired on American television. Since Cartoon Network premiered *Inu-Yasha* in August 2002, 52 episodes have aired during the Adult Swim block.

"We're psyched to premiere the second season of *Inu-Yasha*," says Toonami creative director Sean Akins. "It was a big hit for Adult Swim the first time around, and these episodes just get better and better."

In episodes 53-108, Inu-Yasha and his full-demon brother Sesshomaru, actually join forces to fight the evil Naraku. Naraku summons the spirits of the Shichinintai (as they're called in Japan)—seven extremely skilled warriors whose bloodlust was so great they had to be executed—to gain control of the Sacred Jewel.

Since *Inu-Yasha*'s debut in Japan in 2000, over 130 episodes have been aired, and it's still going strong. ■ CM

NEW TRICKS Inu-Yasha would rather eat dog food than ally with his brother.

NEW MOON

'SAILOR MOON' RETURNS TO TV...FOR REAL

After six years and eight months off the air, creator Naoko Takuchis' Sailor Moon is finally returning to Japanese TV this October.

But now, she's *real*.

Yes, a live-action *Sailor Moon* series started airing this October. The series is produced by Toei, well known for their boy-oriented, live-action superhero series like *Kamen Rider* (called *Masked Rider* in America) and *Ultraman*. Like other Toei productions, including *Ultraman*, the new *Sailor Moon* series uses live actors and extensive CG effects, especially during the transformation sequences, to create more "realistic and dynamic images," according to an article in Japan's *Sponichi* newspaper. The series would be targeted at elementary to junior high school-aged girls.

The cast is largely made up of unknowns, with the most famous name being Keiko Kitagawa (Sailor Mars), who sang the theme songs for *Argentosoma*. The rest of the girls in the cast can look forward to quickly becoming stars (but not necessarily the Sailor Stars).

■ Kumar Sivasubramanian

NAOKO TAKEUCHI & SAILOR MARS

ON THE AIR

WHAT TO WATCH WHERE

BEYBLADE

ABC FAMILY

Beyblade: Weekdays 7:30 a.m.; Sat. 7:30 & 9 a.m.
Daigunder: Weekdays 8:30 a.m., Sat. 9:30 a.m.
Digimon: Weekdays 7 a.m., Sat. 7 & 10 a.m.
Medabots: Sat. 10:30 a.m.

DRAGON BALL GT

CARTOON NETWORK

Toonami: *SD Gundam Force* at 5 p.m. Mon.-Fri., *Dragon Ball* at 6:30 p.m. Mon.-Thurs., *Dragon Ball GT* at 6:30 p.m Fridays.
Adult Swim Weeknights: *Inu-Yasha* at midnight & 3 a.m., *The Big O* at 12:30 & 3:30 a.m., *Trigun* at 1 & 4 a.m., *Kikaider* at 1:30 & 4:30 a.m.
Adult Swim Sunday: *Trigun* at 1 & 4 a.m., *Kikaider* at 1:30 & 4:30 a.m.
Saturday: *Knights of the Zodiac* at 7 p.m., *Yu-Gi-Oh!* at 7:30 p.m., *Zoids* at 8 p.m., *Rurouni Kenshin* at 11 p.m., *Dragon Ball Z* at 11:30 p.m., *.hack//SIGN* at midnight, *Yu Yu Hakusho* at 12:30 a.m.
Hamtaro: Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m., Sun. 3 p.m.
Pokémon: Mon.-Thurs. 7 a.m. & 9 p.m., Fri. 7 a.m.
Yu-Gi-Oh!: Mon.-Thurs. 10 p.m.
Zoids: Mon.-Fri. at 6 a.m.

SHAMAN KING

FOX BOX

Kirby: Right Back At Ya!: Sat. 9 a.m.
Sonic X: Sat. 9:30 a.m.
Shaman King: Sat. 10 a.m.
Ultimate Muscle: Sat. 8:30 a.m.

PHEW! WHATCHU BEEN EATIN'?
BUURP

FUSHIGI YUGI

INTERNATIONAL CHANNEL

Dragon Ball GT: Sun. 10:30 p.m.
El Hazard: Wed. 11 p.m.
Fushigi Yugi: Tues. 11 p.m.
Lost Universe: Mon. 11 p.m.
Tenchi Muyo!: Fri. and Sun. 11 p.m.

KIDS WB!

Megaman NT Warrior: Sat. 9:30 a.m.
Pokémon: Weekdays 4 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m.
Yu-Gi-Oh!: Weekdays 4:30 p.m., Sat. 8:30 & 11 a.m.

GREAT TEACHER ONIZUKA

SHOWTIME NEXT

Sho Next airs the mad popular *Great Teacher Onizuka* five nights a week!
GTO: Mon.-Fri. 9 p.m.

TECHTV

Serial Experiments Lain: Mon.-Fri., at midnight and repeated at 3 a.m.
Silent Mobius: Mon-Fri., 4:30 p.m.
Soultaker: N/L

DON'T FORGET!

These channels air not-to-be-missed anime on irregular schedules, so check the most up-to-date listings on their Websites.
Action Movie Channel: www.actionmoviechannel.com
Anime Network: www. theanimenetwork.com ■ CM

YEAR OF THE MANGA

HOW 2003 WAS THE BREAK-OUT YEAR FOR JAPANESE COMICS IN AMERICA

The year 2003 will be remembered for two things: Schwarzenegger became the governor of California and manga made the U.S. publishing industry sit up and beg.

Sure, manga's been in the U.S. for decades, but 2003's the year we're seeing titles dominate the Nielsen BookScan bestseller lists in adult fiction and graphic novels. One week in October had manga in 38 of the top 50 Adult Fiction Graphic Novel slots!

"It has been the fastest growing category in U.S. bookstores," reveals Dallas Middaugh, director of manga for Random House's Del Rey division. "We've watched manga grow from a tiny niche to a full blown movement in American publishing."

The burst can be partially attributed to the huge success of TOKYOPOP's 100% Authentic Manga line in 2002, which introduced a right-to-left digest-sized book like the original Japanese manga. Since artwork wasn't flipped and material was more "authentic," excited fans responded with their wallets. "Our sales have more than doubled from last year," commented Kristien Brada-Thompson, head of PR for TOKYOPOP. "We're doing extremely well in the BookScans and finding a whole new audience."

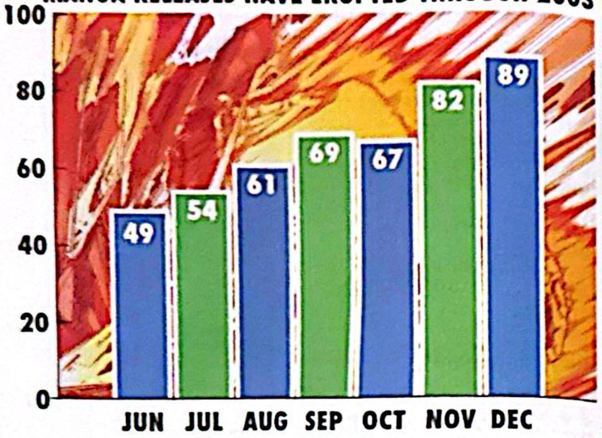
Now, publishing giants and comic book powerhouses have launched—or announced— their own manga line; ADV, Broccoli Books, eigoMANGA, iBooks, Image Comics, Marvel Comics and Media Blasters all joined in, with Random House announcing a May 2004 start and DC Comics taking applications for a manga editor for possible future ventures. As a result, monthly manga titles have jumped from the usual mid-40s, to almost 90 titles by the end of 2003 (see chart).

Formatting, however, is only part of the story. Kurt Hassler, the graphic novels buyer for the Borders bookseller chain credits manga storytelling for its success: "It's a pretty much shôjo-driven market, but most of the top titles appeal to everyone."

The comics crowd is also warming up to the new business model!, DC president Paul Levitz recently told a trade publication, "I'd be really sad if we weren't able come up with a way to be a significant force in that business."

With more and new titles looming on the horizon, looks as if this year's explosion may just be the opening salvo. ■ Jennifer M. Contino

MANGA RELEASES HAVE ERUPTED THROUGH 2003



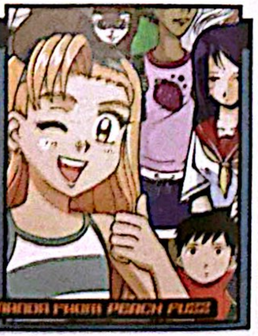
QUICK READS

PAGE TURNIN' NEWS CLIPS

VIZ CLAIMS 'SANCTUARY' Two more shôjo titles are joining the Viz catalog. *Angel Sanctuary* is about a reincarnated angel who must save humanity from being destroyed; *Hanazakari no Kimitachi-E (or Hana-Kimi)* is about an American girl who goes to an all-boys school in Japan to be near her crush. Both will be bimonthly titles, out in Spring 2004.

YOU'RE THOR? Relations between the U.S. and Japan are at another high as writer Akira Yoshida (*Nadesico*, *Record of Lodoss War*) has signed on to pen a miniseries about Marvel Comics' superhero Thor. Called *Thor: Son of Asgard*, the book features art by Greg Tocchini (*Meridian*) and Guru EFX (*Wolverine: Soult*) and will be out in March 2004.

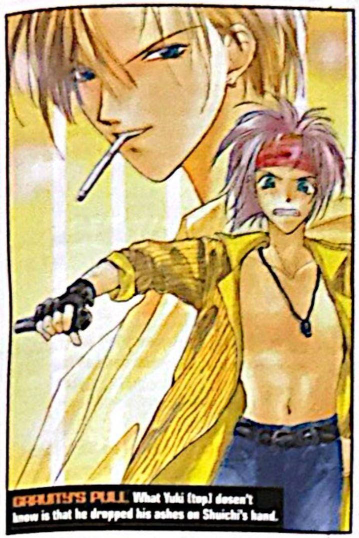
TWICE AS NICE The second set of TOKYOPOP'S "Rising Stars of Manga" contest winners are rushing to the bookstores this December to pick up the new anthology featuring their work. None are happier than Lindsay Cibos from Altamonte Springs, Fla. who won the grand prize for her story "Peach Fuzz"—including $2,500 and a chance to pitch a full series to TOKYOPOP! ■ Trisha L. Sebastian



AMANDA FROM PEACH FUZZ

COMING COMICS

MANGA TO WATCH FOR THIS DECEMBER!



GRAVITY'S PULL What Yuki (top) dosen't know is that he dropped his ashes on Shuichi's hand.

ALICE THE 19TH VOL. 2
Can Alice and her two suitors save her sister from evil forces? Yu Watase (Viz, $9.95)

ASTRO BOY VOL. 22
A new set of Astro Boy short stories involving time machines, love, bombs, brain switching, and the end of Astro! Osamu Tezuka (Dark Horse, $9.95)

AZUMANGA DAIOH VOL. 2
The hysterical trials and tribulations of a group of high school girls continue through their second year. Kiyohiko Azuma (ADV Manga, $9.99)

BATTLE ANGEL ALITA VOL. 1
A cyborg found on a trash heap proves to be much more than meets the eye. The manga James Cameron's eyeing for a future live-action movie, this re-release includes bonus material. Yukito Kishiro (Viz, $9.95)

THE BIG O VOL. 5
When a crime boss threatens all of Paradigm City, can the Big O and Roger keep everyone safe? Hajime Yadate & Hitoshi Ariga (Viz, $9.95)

BERSERK VOL. 2
Guts finally faces the Count, but will his super-sword be enough to defeat the dark source? Kentaro Miura (Dark Horse, $12.95)

BLACK LEOPARD VOL. 2
Eclipse vows to destroy Leopard for the death of his son. Can Leopard's friends save him from the Black Sun's wrath? Wing Shing Ma (ComicsOne, $14.95)

CITY HUNTER VOL. 4
Ryo's crime spree continues, and nothing is too small a target. Tsukasa Hojo (Gutsoon! Entertainment, $9.95)

CRAYON SHINCHAN VOL. 7
Shinchan takes his first plane ride and the friendly skies will never be the same again. Yoshito Usui (ComicsOne, $9.95)

DRAGON BALL Z, VOL. 14
The androids destined to destroy Trunk's future have been activated. Vegeta attempts to destroy them before they fulfill their destiny. Akira Toriyama (Viz, $7.95)

FULL METAL PANIC:
THE ANIME MISSION VOL. 2
Kaname's school outing could turn deadly when hijackers take over the plane. Can an undercover agent save the day? Shouji Gatou & Retsu Tateo (ADV Manga, $9.99)

GRAVITATION VOL. 3
First a supposed fiancée, then a rival band leader threaten to undermine Shuichi's relationship with Yuki. Will their secret derail the band's fortunes? Maki Murakami (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

GUNSLINGER GIRL VOL. 1
Cyborg assassin Henrietta used to be a normal girl, but when her family was attacked, a secret agency rebuilt her and erased her memory. Now her humanity must struggle to survive her programming. Hiroshi Aida (ADV Manga, $9.99)

.HACK//LEGEND OF THE TWILIGHT VOL. 2
A new user joins Shugo and Reina's adventuring party, but she's much more than she seems. Tatsuya Hamazaki & Ren Izumi (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

HELLSING VOL. 1
Hellsing is a secret organization in the U.K. that defends Queen and Country from all threats—dead *and* alive. Kohta Hirano (Dark Horse, $13.95)

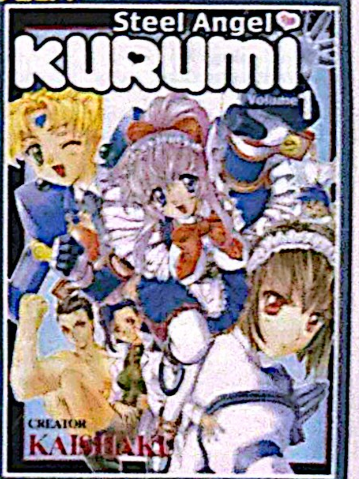
HOW TO BE AN ANGEL VOL. 1
Tenko's stuffed dinosaur is a lot more than meets the eye! This toy gets everyone—especially Tenko—into tons of trouble. Kumiko Kikuchi (I.C. Entertainment, $12.95)

INU-YASHA, VOL. 16
Inu-Yasha has to battle not just Naraku, but a wind-controlling witch with some of Naraku's

HOT PICK

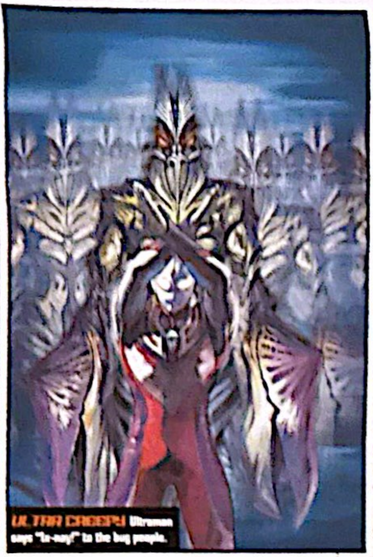
STEEL ANGEL KURUMI VOL. 1

By Kaishaku (ADV Manga, $9.99)



WHAT IT'S ABOUT Nakahito is a young novice at a local shrine who's dared by a few local schoolkids to sneak into an abandoned and possibly haunted mansion. What he doesn't expect to find is a robot in the form of a pretty young girl! Suddenly he trips and kisses her on the lips, waking her up. Nakahito finds out that her name is Kurumi and she now swears her complete and total devotion to Nakahito, who has become her new master. Expect love and battles to coincide as Nakahito learns more about Kurumi, including her awesome powers and a robot sister who wants to destroy them both!

WHY IT'S COOL *Steel Angel Kurumi*'s got it all for the average anime viewer, and the manga is no different. From robot fighting girls to lighthearted romantic comedy, there's bound to be something that appeals to you. While on the surface it seems like this is just another entry in the "many girls fawn over one guy" manga category, *Kurumi*'s fighting elements—and the fact that only one of the robot girls is actually interested in Nakahito—puts this story on interesting and new territory. Plus, how can you resist a girl like Kurumi? ■ Miguel A.E. Betito



ULTRA CREEPY! Ultraman says "Ix-nay!" to the bug people.

powers. Rumiko Takahashi (Viz, $8.95)

RAIJIN COMICS #40
Another installment of *Baki the Grappler*, *Bow Wow Wata*, *City Hunter*, *Fist of the Blue Sky*, *Guardian Angel Getten*, *Keiji*, *Nemuri Kyoshiro*, *Revenge of the Mouflon* and *Slam Dunk*. Various (Gutsoon! Entertainment, $5.95)

RUROUNI KENSHIN VOL. 2
The mysterious Battosai may have returned, but is this truly Kenshin or someone trying to cash in on his reputation? Nobuhiro Watsuki (Viz, $7.95)

SAINT LEGEND VOL. 7
The battle between heaven and hell continues as one of the eight immortals perishes. Andy Seto (ComicsOne, $9.99)

SAMURAI DEEPER KYO VOL. 4
Kyoshiro searches for Yuya and Okuni and comes across a pack of rebels—are they friend or foe? Kamijyo Akimine (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

SEVEN OF SEVEN VOL. 1
Nana Suzuki was split into seven different people when a mysterious crystal was struck by the full moon's light. Each Nana has its own personality, but all get into trouble! Yashuhiro Imagawa (ADV Manga, $9.99)

SHONEN JUMP! VOL. 2 # 2
Another installment of *Dragon Ball Z*, *Hikaru no Go*, *Naruto*, *Shaman King*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Yu Yu Hakusho*. Various (Viz, $4.95)

SILENT MOBIUS VOL. 12
The final battle between the Lucifer Hawks and their human opposers. Kia Asamiya (Viz, 12.95)

SLAYERS SUPER-EXPLOSIVE DEMON STORY VOL. 3
Lina's been captured by a group of horrible thieves and her rescue lies in the hands of Gourry. Will he be able to save Lina on his own? Hajime Kanzaka, Shoko Yoshinaka & Rui Araizumi (CPM Manga, $15.95)

STEEL ANGEL KURUMI VOL. 1
A kiss breaks a spell and awakens a pretty girl who's really the Steel Angel Kurumi, a powerful robot who now thinks the boy is her new master. Kaishaku (ADV Manga, $9.99)

SUPER MANGA BLAST! # 38
Another installment of *Club 9*, *Hypernotes*, *Seraphic Feather*, *Shadow Star*, *3 X 3 Eyes* and *What's Michael?* Various (Dark Horse, $5.99)

THE WANDERER VOL. 2
Can Sei, posing as a human, find out what caused the recent string of human deaths? Narumi Kakinouchi (I.C. Entertainment, $12.95)

TRIGUN VOL. 2
Everyone wants the bounty on Vash's head, but the ladies of the Bernadelli Insurance Agency just want to keep him out of trouble. Yasuhiro Nightow (Dark Horse, $12.95)

ULTRAMAN TIGA #5
Ultraman Tiga and the G.U.T.S. team must stop an alien invasion against almost impossible odds. Tony Wong, Khoo Fuk Lung (Dark Horse, $3.99) ●

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE

CHOBITS: THE MANGA VS THE ANIME

When college student Hideki Motosuwa finds a persocom (that's a human-shaped personal computer) in the trash, he can't believe his luck. But after naming her Chi, he gets soon he is entangled in her mysterious past and involved in some unusual relationships—with a dose of fan service in the manga by TOKYOPOP and the anime by Geneon. But many changes were made from page to screen...

CHI

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

As the manga begins, Hideki already has all the little things one needs to survive in Tokyo—a job, an apartment, and friends. In the anime he has to move to Tokyo in the first episode, and quite a few plots involve him bumbling his way into accommodations, employment and companionship.

MIND OVER MATTER

In the manga, Hideki's a bright guy. He has some trouble studying for cram school, but he can still understand basic computer manuals. He just has trouble with Chi because she's so different. In the anime, stupid Hideki constantly needs to be led by the hand, especially when it comes to persocoms.

THAT GIRL

Hideki's restaurant co-worker Yumi is a happy girl in the manga, unless you mention persocoms around her. Then she gets very sad. This is because of her crush on Manager Ueda, who was previously married to a persocom; Yumi feels she can't compete. However, she doesn't have this inferiority complex in the anime.

CHI & HIDEKI

PANTY RAID

Having a sexy persocom wandering around his apartment with no underwear on makes Hideki a little uncomfortable. So in the manga he rushes to the lingerie shop to buy panties. He can't even manage that much in the anime, and sends Chi to the store instead with hilarious results.

DOUBLE TROUBLE

Chi is often visited by "Dark" Chi in both versions, who looks the same as her and knows everything about Chi's past. She appears to Chi a lot in the manga to discuss Chi's growing feelings for Hideki. Her appearances in the anime are less frequent, usually only appearing when Chi is in big trouble. ■ Kris Naudus

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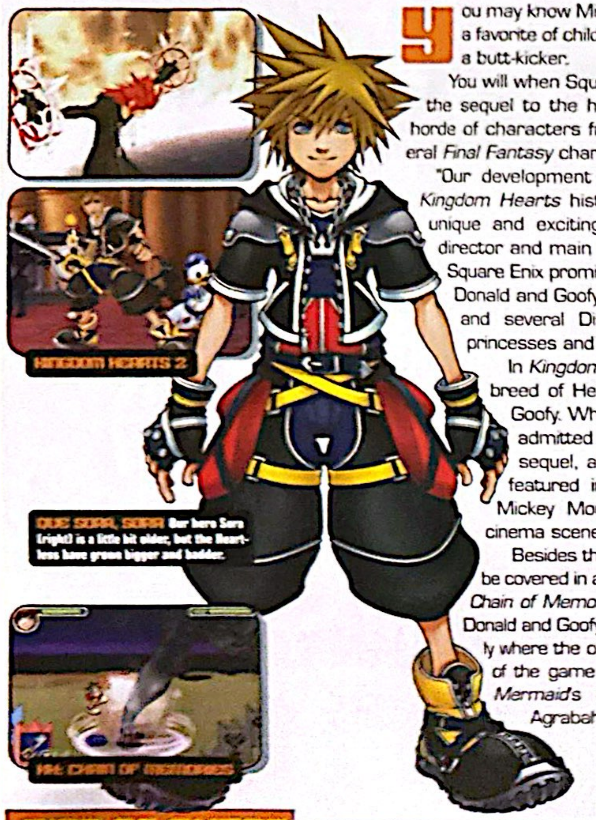
'KINGDOM' COMES

SQUARE ENIX AND DISNEY RE-TEAM FOR MORE 'KINGDOM HEARTS'


KINGDOM HEARTS 2

QUE SORA, SORA Our hero Sora (right) is a little bit older, but the Heartless have grown bigger and badder.

KH: CHAIN OF MEMORIES

You may know Mickey Mouse as a beloved cartoon character and a favorite of children everywhere. You probably didn't know he was a butt-kicker.

You will when Square Enix and Disney publish *Kingdom Hearts 2*, the sequel to the hit PlayStation 2 video game, which merged a horde of characters from Disney movies past and present with several *Final Fantasy* characters in one rousing adventure.

"Our development team is eager to create a new chapter in *Kingdom Hearts* history and determined to deliver an even more unique and exciting gaming experience," said Tetsuya Nomura, director and main character designer of the PS2 series.

Square Enix promises the game will continue the story where Sora, Donald and Goofy had defeated the monsters called the Heartless and several Disney movie villans, then rescued the Disney princesses and found King Mickey.

In *Kingdom Hearts 2*, Sora is now a teen, fighting a tougher breed of Heartless, alongside the ageless Donald Duck and Goofy. While no plot details have been revealed, Square Enix admitted Sora's friends Kairi and Riku will return for the sequel, along with several of the 100+ Disney characters featured in the first *Kingdom Hearts*. Most importantly, Mickey Mouse himself will fight, at least in the game's cinema scenes shown at the recent Tokoyo Game Show.

Besides the sequel, the years in between the two games will be covered in a Game Boy Advance game, titled *Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories*. *Chain* will feature the younger, original Sora, Donald and Goofy through a 2D action game, which will start exactly where the original PS2 game ended. Promotional screenshots of the game displayed Sora crew traveling through *The Little Mermaid*'s undersea kingdom and *Aladdin*'s desert city Agrabah, among other locations, to fight the Heartless.

Both *Kingdom Hearts* games are scheduled for Japanese release sometime in 2004, with an undisclosed American release to follow. ■ Robert Bricken

BITS OF BYTES

THE LATEST WORD ON GAMING

LITTLE TOKYO, BIG GAMES The Tokyo Game Show was a treasure trove of announcements. Konami's *Silent Hill* series will have a fourth entry; the cult favorite RPG series *Suikoden IV* (set 150 years before the first *Suikoden*) will come to America; and Capcom will make a game based on Tim Burton's flick The *Nightmare Before Christmas*.

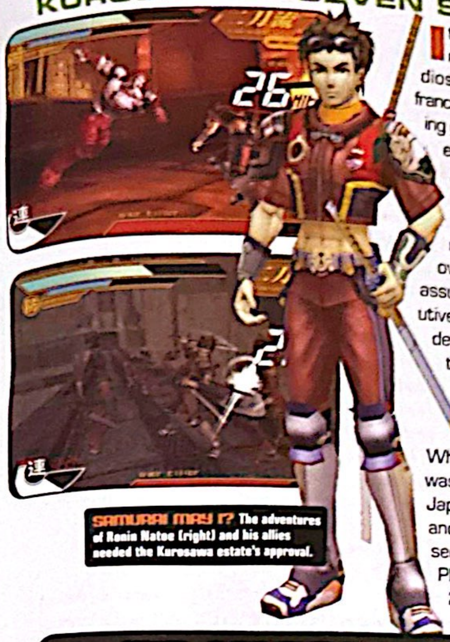
ATOM-A-GO-GO In addition to the previously announced *Astro Boy* game for PlayStation 2, SEGA surprised attendees at this year's Tokyo Game Show by unveiling a companion GBA version. Developed by legendary gamemakers Treasure, the beat-'em-up uses all seven of Astro's wondrous powers to keep gameplay interesting.

GOING BERSERK Sammy isn't stopping with a revival of Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (see next page). The publisher recently unveiled a few early screenshots of its 3D incarnation of the blood-thirsty anime, *Berserk*, for the PlayStation 2. Sadly, details are sketchy...except for the game's late-2004 street date. ■ Jon M. Gibson

GUTS FROM BERSERK

'SEVEN HEAVEN

KUROSAWA'S SEVEN SAMURAI JOURNEY TO '20XX'



SAMURAI MAY I? The adventures of Ronin Natoe (right) and his allies needed the Kurosawa estate's approval.

It may not look like the classic movie, but publisher Sammy Studios (behind the hit *Guilty Gear* franchise) promises that their upcoming game *Seven Samurai 20XX* has everything to do with filmmaker Akira Kurosawa's classic.

"Everything regarding the game's premise was fully reviewed by Akira Kurosawa's own son, Hisao Kurosawa," assures Hiroshi Matsumoto, executive producer at Tokyo-based developer Dimps. "This includes the script, dialogue, settings—anything to do with the story and how it paid homage to the film."

What wasn't based on the movie was the setting. Instead of feudal Japan, the ancient wardrobes and black-and-white visuals as seen in the legendary film, the PlayStation 2 game (due in late 2004) has placed the seven samurai into sometime late in the post-apocalyptic 21st century. While the Kurosawa estate wrung the game through a rigorous approval process, Matsumoto says that "[Hisao Kurosawa's son] was less involved with game design and concept."

To create this daring new look, French artist Moebius—famous for designing the costumes and metropolis settings for *The Fifth Element*—was tapped. The result is a flashy, colorful world ripe with futuristic swordplay. "We were originally looking at [*Akira* creator] Katsuhiro Otomo's work," Matsumoto continues. "But when we saw Moebius' sketchbook, we realized that his style of art was much better suited to what we wanted for the game."

The game's story focuses on Natoe, a neo-samurai striving to fend off a horde of menacing robots to save the last human city on Earth. Similar to the film, he recruits six warriors to aid him in battle. ■ JG

TO IMPORT OR NOT TO IMPORT?

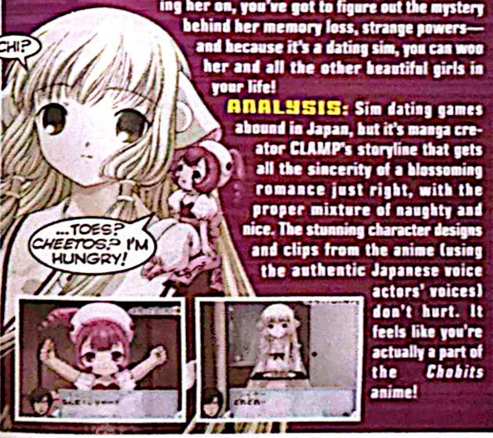
BRING IT!

CHOBITS (PS2)

SOFT-CORE HARDWARE

HOW TO PLAY: In this new sim dating game, you play as high school student Hideki Motosuwa, who finds a persocom (personal computer) in the shape of a young girl on your way home. After turning her on, you've got to figure out the mystery behind her memory loss, strange powers—and because it's a dating sim, you can woo her and all the other beautiful girls in your life!

ANALYSIS: Sim dating games abound in Japan, but it's manga creator CLAMP's storyline that gets all the sincerity of a blossoming romance just right, with the proper mixture of naughty and nice. The stunning character designs and clips from the anime (using the authentic Japanese voice actors' voices) don't hurt. It feels like you're actually a part of the *Chobits* anime!


CHI?
...TOES? CHEETOS? I'M HUNGRY!

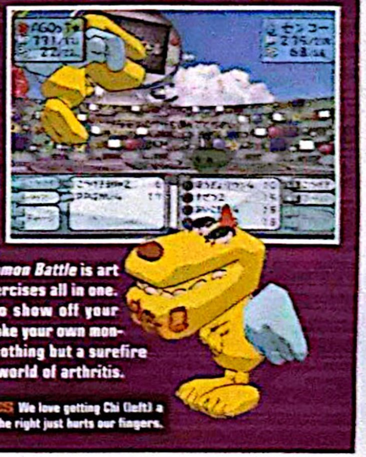
KEEP IT!

TENSAI BIT-KUN GURAMON BATTLE

SCRIBBLE ME THIS...

HOW TO PLAY: Steal the semi-clever gimmick from the video game *Magic Pengel*, where players actually draw their own monsters to fight in a tournament. Take away all semblance of combat gameplay, instead making each and every attack and move (and this is a fighting game, so there's plenty of it) all keyed to one button. Hit that button. *Forever.*

ANALYSIS: *Tensai Bit-Kun Guramon Battle* is art class and thumb exercises all in one. Even if you want to show off your artistic skills and make your own monsters, the game is nothing but a surefire trip to the magical world of arthritis.

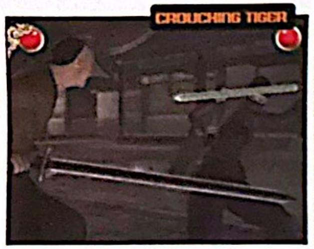


CHOBITS & BYTES We love getting Chi (left) a date, but that thing to the right just hurts our fingers.

WE PICK 'EM, YOU PLAY 'EM. HERE'S WHAT'S COMING SOON...

DECEMBER

CIMA: THE ENEMY Humans and the bizarre race called the CIMA have warred for eons, at least according to this RPG. As Ark J, a guardian of the gate between the two realms, you have to protect your town and try to bring peace. Luckily you'll have help with active NPCs, who can do your work for you! (Natsume, GBA)

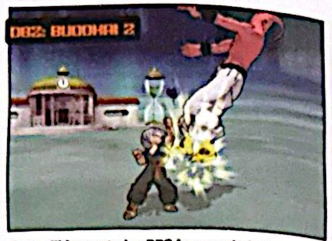


CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON Sure, the movie has come and gone, but that didn't stop Ubi Soft from taking advantage of its cult-classic status. In this kung-fu brawler, you'll take on the role of one of three high-flying fighters—Li Mu Bai, Jen or Shu Lien—in your journey to obtain the 400-year-old Green Dynasty Sword. Even cooler: you get to battle the Jade Fox. (Ubi Soft, PS2 & Xbox)

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION: ULTRAMIX While there isn't anything incredibly different about this Xbox release, a little thing called Xbox Live makes it worth your hard-earned cash. New songs, characters and dance steps will be downloadable once this dance-happy hit lands on store shelves, so it's like having a never-ending party—if your feet don't cramp up first. (Konami, Xbox)

DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI 2 After the mixed reviews of the original, developer Dimps has made oodles of changes to *Budokai 2*. Now the *Dragon Ball* combatants are cel-shaded instead of full-fledged 3D, there is a new *Mario Party*-style board game mode, and the roster of fighters has been expanded to 34, including Android 20, Kid Trunks and Goten. (Atari, PS2)

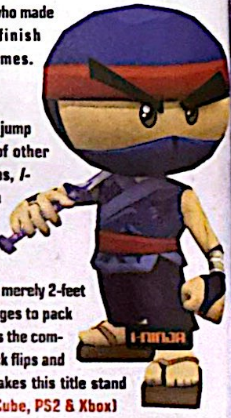
FINAL FANTASY X-2 In this first-ever sequel to a *Final Fantasy* game, Square Enix has added girls, guns and a hyperactive new battle system that will keep stodgy RPG fans on their toes. Join Yuna, Rikku and new bad girl Paine as they try to hunt down Spheres and see if Yuna's boy Tidus is really still alive. (Square Enix, PS2)



GOTCHA FORCE Taking a lead from its Power Stone franchise, Capcom adds a lot of "oomph" to the fighting genre with *Gotcha Force*. Rather than control merely one character, you get to play puppet master with a team of robotic toys—from huge, mechanical dragons to smaller, power-suited humans—to kick ass. (Capcom, GameCube)

.HACK PART 4: QUARATINE Supposedly the last of a four-part RPG epic, you'll be able to transfer all your data from *Part 3* into this concluding chapter. Bandai is promising some amazingly powerful skills and equipment—as well as tough-as-a-truckload-of-nails baddies—for those who made the effort to finish the other three games. (Bandai, PS2)

I-NINJA Rather than jump on the bandwagon of other upcoming ninja romps, *I-Ninja* resorts to a blend of Japanese and American designs. The little, sword-clanging lad is merely 2-feet tall, but he still manages to pack a mean punch. But it's the combat crossed with slick flips and wall-walking that makes this title stand out. (Namco, GameCube, PS2 & Xbox)



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE FOUR SWORDS While you may have played the Game Boy Advance version of *Four Swords* that came out last year, this *Zelda* is a perfect example of Nintendo's continued dedication to connectivity. Competing against

HOT PICK

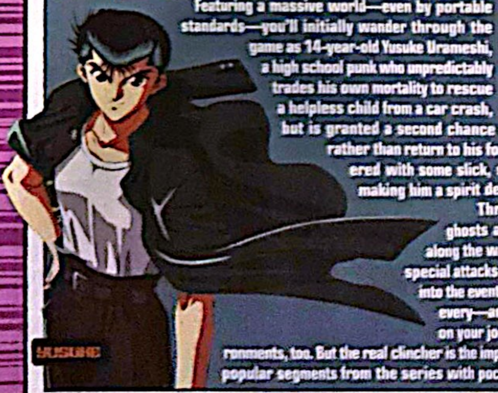
YU YU HAKUSHO: SPIRIT DETECTIVE

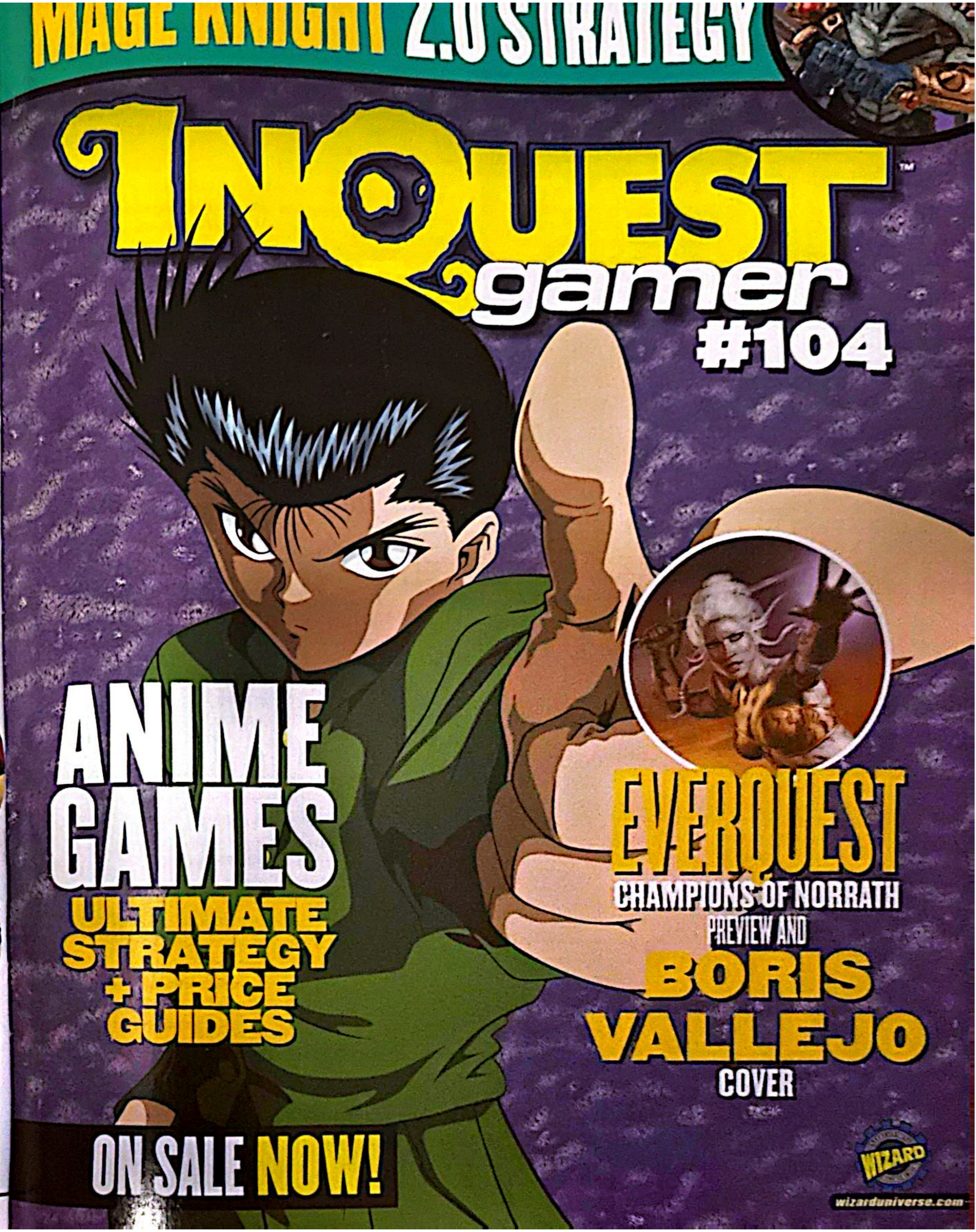
Due in December from Atari on Game Boy Advance

Atari has made good on its E3 promise to make a Yu Yu Hakusho game that will appease its many fans. In *Yu Yu Hakusho: Spirit Detective*, the first in a lineup of several planned sequels for the GBA, you're able to control each of the six major characters from the popular series: Yusuke, Kuwabara, Kurama, Hiei, Botan and Kayko. But that's just the beginning.

Featuring a massive world—even by portable standards—you'll initially wander through the game as 14-year-old Yusuke Urameshi, a high school punk who unpredictably trades his own mortality to rescue a helpless child from a car crash, but is granted a second chance and sent back to Earth. But rather than return to his former existence, he's empowered with some slick, supernatural tricks, in effect making him a spirit detective.

Through 24 levels, you'll hunt ghosts as a pro, earning experience along the way to upgrade your arsenal of special attacks and weapons. Tying perfectly into the events of the show, you'll encounter every—and we do mean every—enemy on your journey and many familiar environments, too. But the real clincher is the impressive cut scenes, reenacting popular segments from the series with pocket-sized animation. ■ JG





SECRETS FOR GAMERS ONLY

Go! My Bit Beast!!

BEYBLADE: SUPER TOURNAMENT BATTLE (GAMECUBE)

To unlock Daichi, DJ or King, simply defeat them in tournament mode. To acquire the Dragoon V2 booster pack, talk to the DJ in the lobby after beating the Tournament. If you talk to him after winning the Championship, you'll get the Dual Dragoon bit chip!

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4 (XBOX)

For a blast from the past, if you face off against yourself (i.e. Sima Yi vs. Sima Yi), the computer-controlled characters will be wearing their costumes from *Dynasty Warriors 3*.

OTOGI: MYTH OF DEMONS (XBOX)

To achieve the Moonlight Sword, free all the souls in the first 28 levels of the game. For the Orchid Malevolence, kill the hydra in level 25.

VANESSA FROM P.N.03

P.N.03 (GAMECUBE)

To access the Blackbird suit, complete the game under Easy or Normal mode. It is maxed out on every level and has three super moves from the get-go. The Papillon suit can be earned by completing the game on a higher difficulty mode using the Blackbird suit. You must also get a Professional ranking on all of the 50 trial missions.

VIEWTIFUL JOE (GAMECUBE)

To play in Super mode (giving your character an unlimited VFX meter), complete the game with a Rainbow V ranking in every level, then select the New Game menu option, choose the character used to complete the game, and press Z. ■ JG

VIEWTIFUL JOE

four friends, you'll fight for [illegible] or duck into caves using your GBA screen. (Nintendo, GameCube)

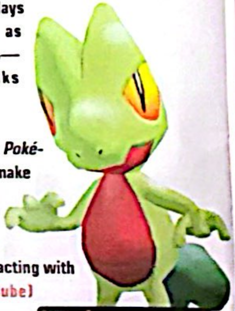
METAL SLUG 3 A cult-favorite series, this hilarious side-scroller pits you (plus an unlimited amount of ammo and occasional tanks) against evil soldiers, mummies, aliens, familiar dictators and more. Besides classic gameplay and four characters to choose from, *Metal Slug 3* is full of secrets and humor. (SNK, PS2)

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: ENCOUNTERS IN SPACE As an arcade-styled fighter, like in the previous *Federation Vs. Zeon*, this time you can take control of the Gundams and Mobile Suits of *0083: Stardust Memories*! Chase down Zeon remnants after they steal a nuclear-equipped Gundam prototype, or teach the Feddies a lesson as the Zeon yourself. Over 70 mecha to choose from and 80 minutes of anime footage included! (Bandai, PS2)

NINJA GAIDEN

NINJA GAIDEN It's been a while since we last witnessed Ryu Hayabusa slicing and dicing, but Tecmo is finally pulling the coolest ninja in town out of retirement. Developed by Team Ninja, the guys responsible for making the "assets" in *Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball* look so real, it's a graphically intense feast of violence. (Tecmo, Xbox)

PAC-MAN VS. With help from Nintendo, Namco brings Pac-Man back in a whole new way. This time, up to four Pac-people can play at once, using a Game Boy Advance, where one person plays as Pac-Man, and the other three players play as Ghosts and compete for points! The catch is this—only Pac-Man can see the full maze, thanks to the GBA. (Namco, GameCube)

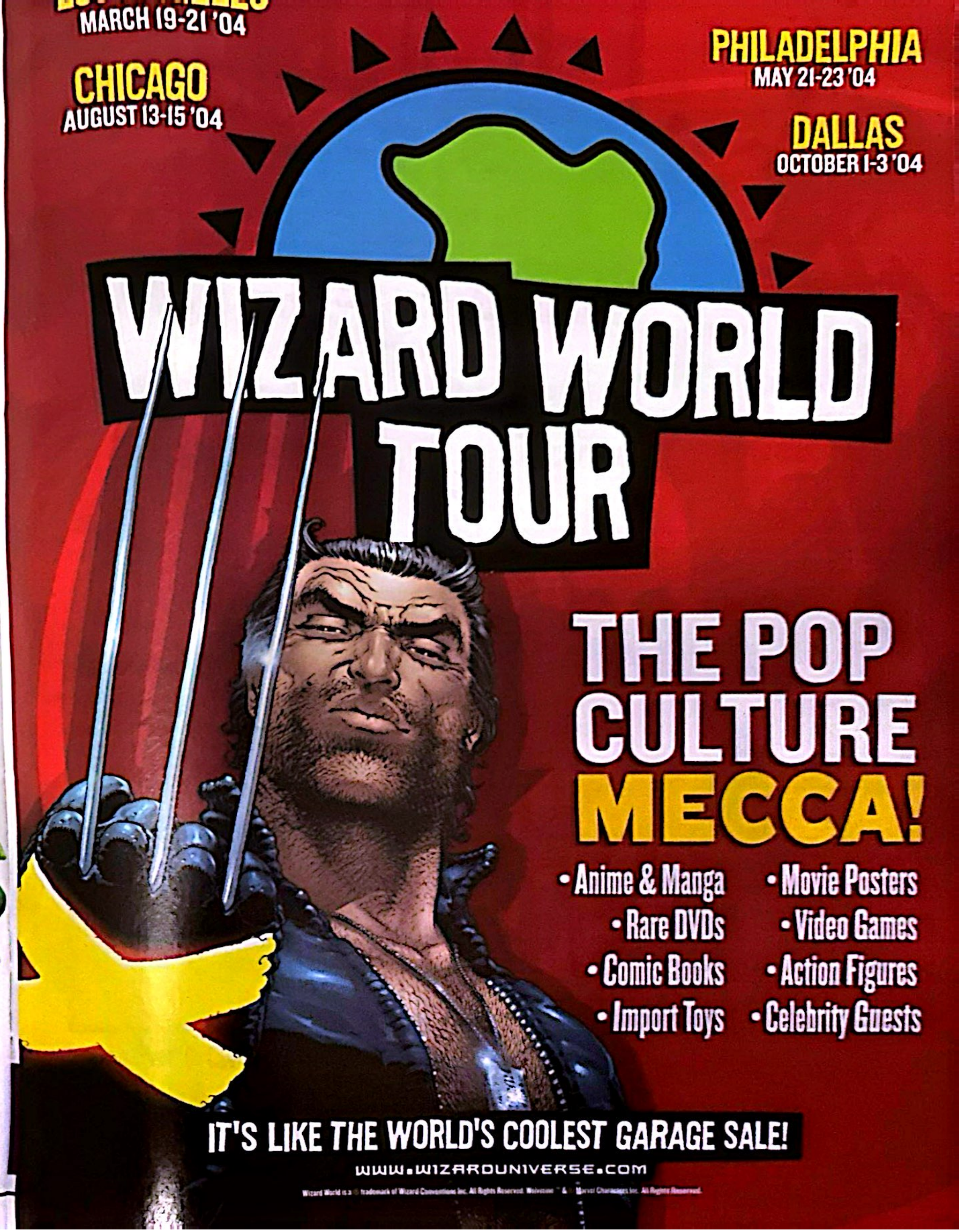


POKÉMON CHANNEL

POKÉMON CHANNEL Think Seaman crossed with *Pokémon*, because the main goal of this release is to make Pikachu a happy camper. As the very first beta tester of the brand-new Pokémon Channel, you'll be tuned in to all things, well, Poké. Pikachu loves to watch, too, and that's your key to interacting with the cute, yellow sewer rat. (Nintendo, GameCube)

R: RACING EVOLUTION While not officially an entry into Namco's venerable *Ridge Racer* series, this racing simulation promises a happy marriage between *Ridge Racer's* arcade-y physics and the simulation gameplay and realism of *Gran Turismo*. And it doesn't hurt that it's absolutely gorgeous. Plus it uses all real cars to boot! (Namco, GameCube, PS2 & Xbox)

SWORD OF MANA As one of Square Enix's first GBA titles since rekindling their relationship with Nintendo, *Sword of Mana* is actually a remake of the 1990 Game Boy release entitled *Final Fantasy Adventures*. Its sequel, *Secret of Mana*, made it to SNES, but this will essentially be a brand-new experience for most. (Nintendo, GBA)



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STUFF

TETSUO'S SPECIAL HOLIDAY PICKS!

LET'S GET CRACKIN'!

KANEDA SAID I WAS TOO *DUMB* TO PICK OUT GIFTS FOR PEOPLE.
I'LL SHOW HIM!

FOR THE TEACHER'S PET

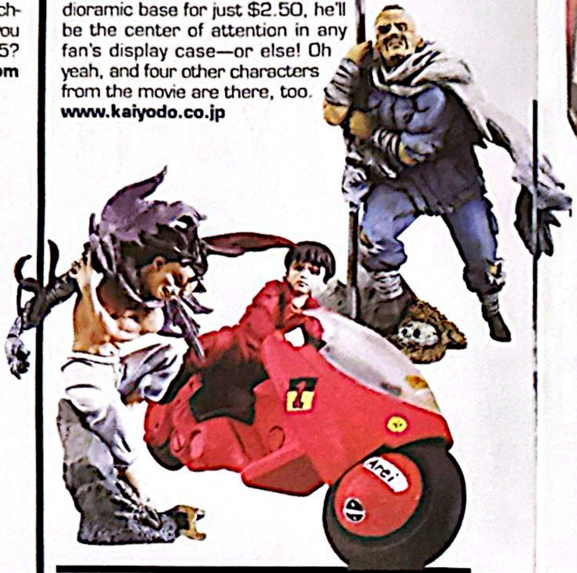
It's natural for many of us to have crushes on teachers, but we guarantee you'll have the hots for the new *Please, Teacher!* Mizuho Seated Resin Statue. At 5" high, a beautifully sculpted Mizuho sits while munching on "Pochy!" Who'd want apples when you could have her for just $85?

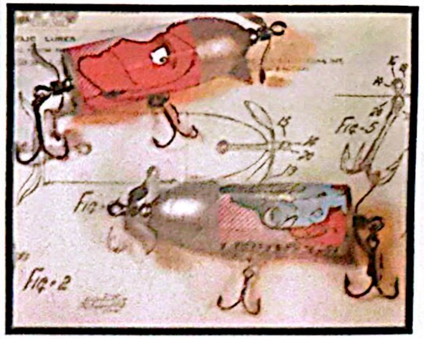
www.artfx-kotobukiya.com

FOR REALLY COOL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE

Katsuhiro Otomo's amazing film *Akira* has just been released into a mini-toy line featuring our smart shopper! At 3" tall and with a cool dioramic base for just $2.50, he'll be the center of attention in any fan's display case—or else! Oh yeah, and four other characters from the movie are there, too.

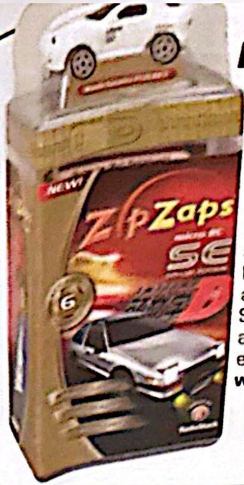
www.kaiyodo.co.jp





FOR YOUR DAD THE FISHERMAN

Lupin's never been caught, but that doesn't mean Lupin can't catch—fish, that is! These $12.99 top-water fishing lures are shaped like bullets, and feature characters and still shots from the classic anime series. Now in pink, green, blue, and red!



FOR AN ASPIRING TOFU DELIVERY BOY

Now you can ride the adventure with *Initial D*'s RadioShack's ZipZaps SE. Race and customize the $24.99 SE Starter Kits for greater speed and performance, and leave everyone else in your dust.

www.zipzaps.com

FOR YOUR ANNOYING LITTLE BROTHER

Vash is loved by the young and old, just like this Vash the Stampede plush from *Trigun*! Standing an impressively super-deformed 9" tall, only $12.99 gets you all the cuddles you want—till he destroys your city, that is.

www.geanimation.com

FOR PEOPLE WHO KICK IT OLD SCHOOL

Giant robot toys are already plenty cool, but imagine if they could actually move on their own—just like the *Tetsujin-28* Battery Operated Walking Toy! At only $19.99, this PVC blast from the past is sure to walk off with your heart, but not walk off with your wallet.

HOLIDAY HOT PICK

VAMPIRE HUNTER D LEILA BUST

FOR YOUR LOCAL VAMPIRE SLAYER

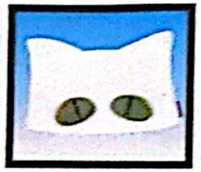
The youngest vampire hunter in *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust*, Leila sure could handle herself pretty well. Now you can handle her too, with this 7" tall *Vampire Hunter D* Previews Exclusive Leila Resin Bust. With a cool gothic base and all for $39.99, grab one before this offer bites the dust!

www.artfx-kotobukiya.com

ZIPPER'S BROKEN.

FOR YOUR LITTLE BROTHER WHO NEEDS A HOBBY

What's the connection between battling tops and trading card games? You can play both of them on tabletops, just like in Decipher's new *Beyblade* TCG. With starter decks at $11.99 and booster packs for $3.99, use cards to hit and knock the opponent's tops out of the arena, and character cards to boost your techniques and experience! **www.decipher.com**



FOR YOUR HOT-HEADED BEST FRIEND

Anime shirts may be cool, but *Di Gi Charat* Fleece Caps are hot! Based on the eared headgear worn by Coo and Dejiko right in the hilarious anime, these come in fleece ($16.99 to $21.99), and fluffy fleece ($25.99 to $29.99), and even feature earflaps to keep your human ears warm!

www.anime-gamers.com

MY *HEAD*... IT *HURTS*... I NEED THAT CUTE HAT... OR *PILLS!*

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Now you can bid on stuff being sold on Yahoo! Japan without even knowing a lick of Japanese. Items vary daily. ■ Miguel A.E. Betita

FOR THE NINJA DEVOTEE

Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven is one kick-butt videogame, and its toys from Kotobukiya are no different! A 4" Rikimaru's busting down doors, while a 5" Ayame's coolly deciding how to cut your throat. With cool bases right from the game environments and super-articulation, these two ninja are sure to pull a vanishing act from toy shelves everywhere. **www.artfx-kotobukiya.com**

MY FLESH IS *BURSTING* WITH CHRISTMAS SPIRIT!

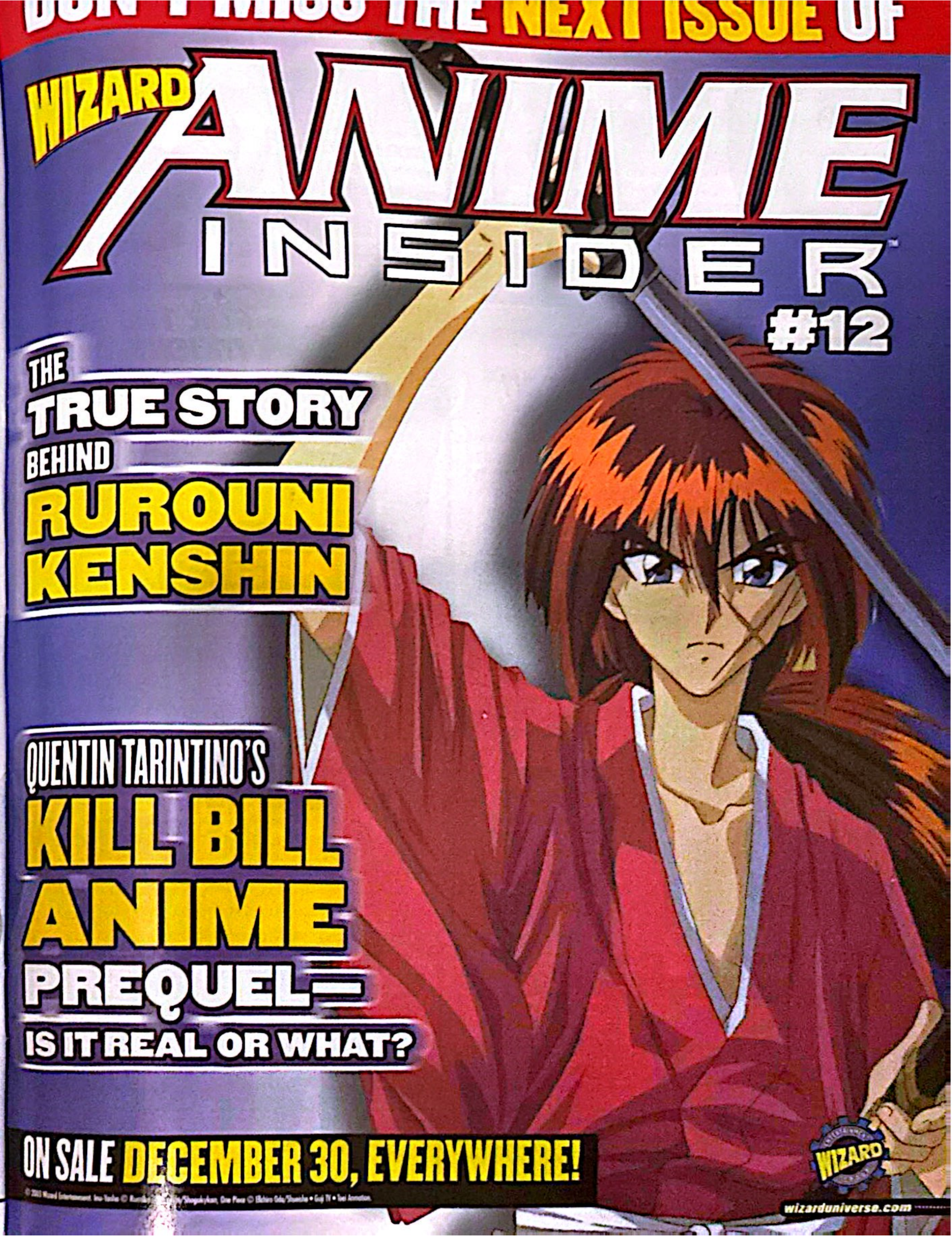
FOR YOUR COSPLAY-FANATIC FRIEND

Taking photos of all the cosplayers at anime conventions is a great way of remembering them, but why settle for 2D? Now they can come to life with this amazing Photo3D kit for $129, which has everything you need to take your own stereo photographs with any digital camera! **www.photo3-d.com**

FOR YOUR LITTLE SISTER

Chobits' Chi might be suffering from a multiple personality disorder, but that doesn't make her, or Atashi (the main character from Chi's favorite book), any less cute! At approximately 7" and 6" tall respectively, these two will take a big byte out of your hearts. $10.99 for Atashi, $11.99 for Chi. **www.geanimation.com**

CHI!
I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU.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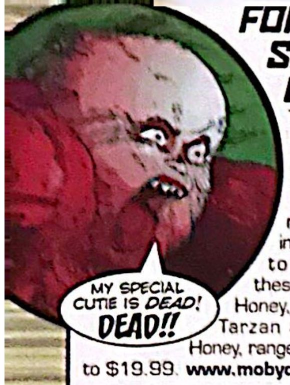
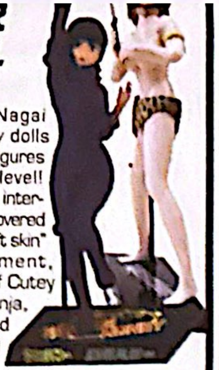

MY SPECIAL CUTIE IS DEAD! DEAD!!

FOR YOUR SPECIAL CUTIE



These Go Nagai *Cutey Honey* dolls take action figures to the next level! With detailed internal skeletons covered in a realistic "soft skin" to allow movement, these 6" figures of Cutey Honey, Hurricane, Ninja, Tarzan and Wounded Honey, range from $18.99 to $19.99. **www.mobydick.co.jp**

FOR YOUR LOCAL PEST EXTERMINATOR

You want a piece of this? Jack's itching for a fight after destroying a nasty Beetlebot in this new cold cast resin statue from Cartoon Network. Limited to 2,500 pieces for $89 each, this Samurai Jack vs. Beetlebot Sculpture makes for a perfect piece for anyone's collection! **www.cartoonnetwork.com**

FOR YOUR OWN DEMON ON WHEELS

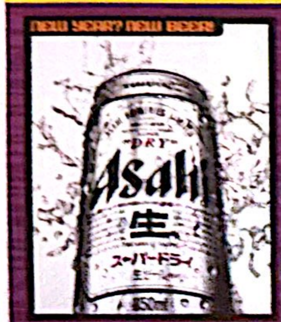
You can make tracks like Speed with the new $11.99 Speed Racer Mach 5 Radio-Controlled Car, with batteries that recharge in less than one minute! Just make sure Spridle and Chim Chim aren't hiding out in the trunk! **www.speedracer.com**

FOR THE MUSIC SNOB

Japan pop star T.M. Revolution is known for singing theme songs from *Rurouni Kenshin* and *Gundam SEED*. Now you can catch the rest of the Revolution with his first CD "coordinate" and concert DVD from Tofu Records. The CD is $13.98; The *Summer Crush* DVD is $28. **www.tofurecords.com**

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

LOOKING TO IMPRESS? LEARN TO GO O-SEIBO


NEW YEAR? NEW BEER!

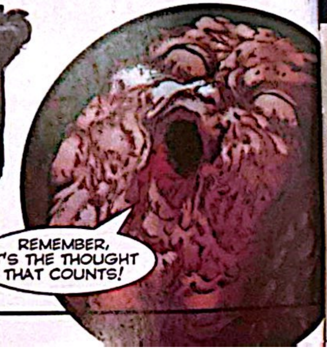
One of the Japanese New Year's traditions is to give gifts called o-seibo—typically gifts of food or drink or just really cool things that people wouldn't think of buying themselves. You give o-seibo gifts to bosses, neighbors, teachers... anyone you respect or want to impress.

For the year 2002, Ajinomoto General Foods, Inc. reported on the top five o-seibo gifts given and received by housewives were in Japan. Here they are! ■ TLS

O-SEIBO GIFTS GIVEN BY HOUSEWIVES WERE:	IN RETURN, THEY WISHED TO RECEIVE:
1. Beer 28.5 %	1. Gift Certificates 66.3%
2. Coffee 24.0%	2. Beer 34.3%
3. Fresh Foods 21.5%	3. Washing Detergents 32.7%
4. Ham and Sausage 16.7%	4. Coffee 31.3 %
5. Condiments and Cooking Oils 13.2%	5. Fresh Foods 21.3%

FOR YOUR GUN CRAZY UNCLE

In the videogame *Gungrave*, he doles out death, but as the *Gungrave* Beyond the Grave 8-inch action figure, he deals out sculpted coolness and loads of articulation! With variant heads and a cool coffin gun-storage accessory, for $49.99 this is one toy you'll take to your coffin! **www.artfx-kotobukiya.com**


REMEMBER, IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS!

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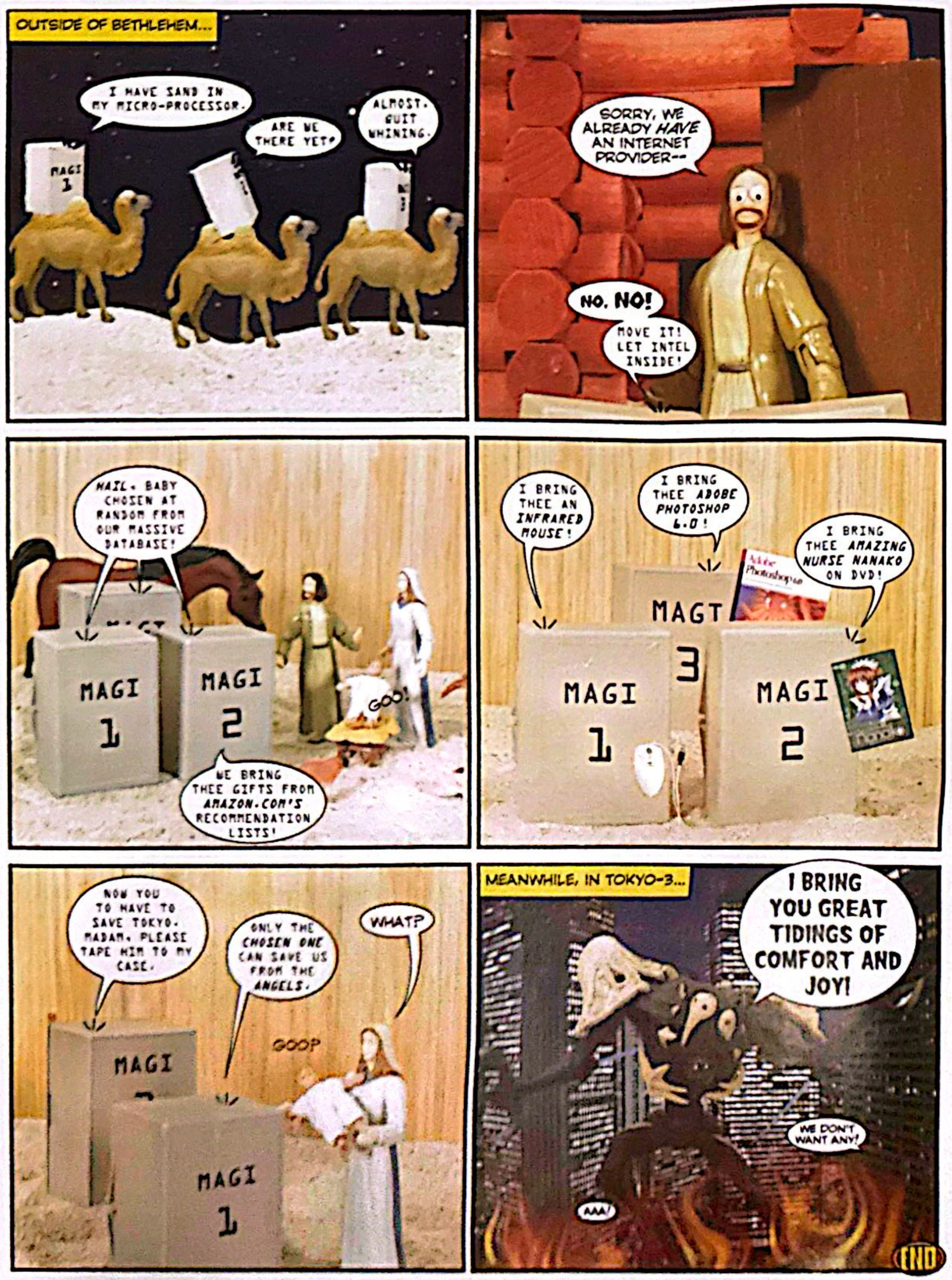
THE A.I PLAYERS PRESENT

THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI, EVA-STYLE


OUTSIDE OF BETHLEHEM...
I HAVE SAND IN MY MICRO-PROCESSOR.
ARE WE THERE YET?
ALMOST. QUIT WHINING.
MAGI 1
SORRY, WE ALREADY *HAVE* AN INTERNET PROVIDER--
NO. NO!
MOVE IT! LET INTEL INSIDE!
HAIL. BABY CHOSEN AT RANDOM FROM OUR MASSIVE DATABASE!
MAGI 1
MAGI 2
GOO!
WE BRING THEE GIFTS FROM *AMAZON.COM'S* RECOMMENDATION LISTS!
I BRING THEE AN *INFRARED MOUSE!*
I BRING THEE *ADOBE PHOTOSHOP 6.0!*
I BRING THEE *AMAZING NURSE NANAKO* ON DVD!
MAGI 3
MAGI 1
MAGI 2
NOW YOU TO HAVE TO SAVE TOKYO. MADAM. PLEASE TAPE HIM TO MY CASE.
ONLY THE *CHOSEN ONE* CAN SAVE US FROM THE *ANGELS.*
WHAT?
GOOP
MAGI
MAGI 1
MEANWHILE, IN TOKYO-3...
I BRING YOU GREAT TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY!
WE DON'T WANT ANY!
AAA!
END

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